INHERITANCE AND DOMINION

Volume 1

INHERITANCE AND DOMINION

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON DEUTERONOMY

Volume 1

GARY NORTH

POINT FIVE PRESS
Dallas, Georgia

Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy, Volume 1

Copyright © 2012, 2020 by Gary North

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Published by
Point Five Press
P.O. Box 2778
Dallas, Georgia 30132

Typesetting by Kyle Shepherd

This book is dedicated to my wife

Sharon North

who gave me the original idea
for this commentary in 1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 1

Foreword xi
Preface xxxi

Introduction 1

Part 1: Transcendence/Presence (Deut. 1:1–5)

1 The God Who Brings Judgment in History (Deut. 1:1–5) . . . 19

Part 2: Hierarchy/Representation (Deut. 1:6–4:49)

2 A Delayed Inheritance (Deut. 1:6–8) 27
3 Delegated Authority and Social Order (Deut. 1:9–13) 40
4 The Face of Man (Deut. 1:17) 48
5 Bureaucratic Counsel (Deut. 1:21–23) 56
6 The Skills of Foreign Trade (Deut. 2:4–6) 67
7 Transferring the Inheritance (Deut. 3:27–28) 75
8 Evangelism Through Law (Deut. 4:5–8) 82
9 Hear, Fear, and Testify (Deut. 4:9–10) 88
10 Removing the Inheritance (Deut. 4:25–28) 100

Part 3: Ethics/Law/Boundaries (Deut. 5–26)

11 Judicial Continuity (Deut. 5:1–5) 115
12 Sabbath and Liberation (Deut. 5:14–15) 123
13 Law and Sanctions (Deut. 5:32–33) 132
14 The Wealth of Nations (Deut. 6:1–3) 140
15 Law and Inheritance (Deut. 6:4–9) 152
16 Genocide and Inheritance (Deut. 7:1–5) 168
17 By Law or By Promise? (Deut. 8:1) 188

18 Miracles, Entropy, and Social Theory (Deut. 8:2–4) 197
19 Chastening and Inheritance (Deut. 8:5–7) 215
20 Overcoming Poverty (Deut. 8:9). 221
21 The Assertion of Autonomy (Deut. 8:10–17). 229
22 Economic Growth as Covenantal Confirmation (Deut. 8:18) 234
23 Disinheriting the Heirs (Deut. 8:19–20) 257
24 Overcoming the Visible Odds (Deut. 9:1–6). 269
25 Sonship, Servitude, and Inheritance (Deut. 9:26–29). . . . 289
26 Sonship, Obedience, and Immigration (Deut. 10:12–16) . . 297
27 Oath, Ssanctions, and Inheritance (Deut. 10:20–22) 312
28 Rain and Inheritance (Deut. 11:10–14). 319
29 Law, Sanctions, and Inheritance (Deut. 11:18–21) 329

Volume 2

30 Common Grace and Legitimate Inheritance (Deut. 12:1–3) 345
31 Communal Meals and National Incorporation (Deut. 12:5–10) 364
32 The Murderous Gods of Canaan (Deut. 12:28–31) 375
33 The Lure of Magic: Something for Nothing (Deut. 13:1–5) 382
34 Commerce and Covenant (Deut. 14:21) 397
35 Tithes of Celebration (Deut. 14:22–29) 409
36 The Charitable Loan (Deut. 15:1–5) 431
37 Lending and Dominion (Deut. 15:6). 446
38 Consuming Capital in Good Faith (Deut. 15:19–22) 453
39 Individual Blessing and National Feasting (Deut. 16:14–17) 461
40 Casuistry and Inheritance (Deut. 16:18–20) 468
41 Israel's Supreme Court (Deut. 17:8–13) 483
42 Boundaries on Kingship (Deut. 17:14). 500
43 Levitical Inheritance Through Separation (Deut. 18:1–2) . . . 516
44 Landmarks and Social Cooperation (Deut. 19:14). 525
45 The Penalty for Perjury (Deut. 19:15–19) 535
46 A Hierarchy of Commitments (Deut. 20:5–7) 549
47 A Few Good Men (Deut. 20:8) 557
48 Limits on Empire (Deut. 20:10–18) 565
49 Fruit Trees as Covenantal Testimonies (Deut. 20:19–20) . . . 582
50 Double Portion, Double Burden (Deut. 21:15–17). 592

51 Executing a Rebellious Adult Son (Deut. 21:18–21). 606
52 Lost and Found (Deut. 22:1–4) 626
53 Nature's Roots and Fruits (Deut. 22:6–7) 639
54 The Rooftop Railing Law (Deut. 22:8) 645
55 Laws Prohibiting Mixtures (Deut. 22:9–11) 655
56 The Fugitive Slave Law (Deut. 23:15–16) 666
57 Usury: Yes and No (Deut. 23:19–20) 675
58 Vows, Contracts, and Productivity (Deut. 23:21–23) 688
59 Free for the Picking (Deut. 23:24–25) 700

Volume 3

60 Collateral, Servitude, and Dignity
(Deut. 24:6, 10–13, 17–18) 723
61 Wages and Oppression (Deut. 24:14–15) 740
62 Gleaning: Charitable Inefficiency (Deut. 24:19–22). 762
63 Unmuzzling the Working Ox (Deut. 25:4) 777
64 Levirate Marriage and Family Name (Deut. 25:5–6) 791
65 Just Weights and Justice (Deut. 25:13–16). 807
66 The Firstfruits Offering: A Token Payment
(Deut. 26:1–3) 838
67 Positive Confession and Corporate Sanctions
(Deut. 26:12–15) 844

Part 4: Oath/Sanctions (Deut. 27–30)

68 Landmark and Curse (Deut. 27:17) 853
69 Objective Wealth and Historical Progress
(Deut. 28:4–5, 8, 11) 861
70 Credit as a Tool of Dominion (Deut. 28:12–13, 43–44) . . . 880
71 The Covenant of Prosperity (Deut. 29:9–15) 892
72 Captivity and Restoration (Deut. 30:1–5) 897
73 Life and Dominion (Deut. 30:19–20) 903

Part 5: Succession/Inheritance (Deut. 31–33)

74 Courage and Dominion (Deut. 31:4–8) 911
75 Law and Liberty (Deut. 31:9–13) 918
76 A Covenantal Song of Near-Disinheritance
(Deut. 31:16–18) 927

Conclusion 931

Volume 4

APPENDIX A—Modern Economics as a Form of Magic 951
APPENDIX B—Individualism, Holism, and Covenantalism . . . 969
APPENDIX C—Syncretism, Pluralism, and Empire 983
APPENDIX D—The Demographics of American Judaism 997
APPENDIX E—Free Market Capitalism 1015
APPENDIX F—The Economic Re-Education of
Ronald J. Sider 1049
APPENDIX G—Strong Drink 1065
APPENDIX H—Weak Reed: The Politics of Compromise 1071
APPENDIX I—Eschatology, Law, and Pietism 1081
APPENDIX J—Categories of the Mosaic Law 1107

FOREWORD

And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

ECCLESIASTES 12:12–14

This book is a narrowly focused Bible commentary: the laws of Deuteronomy that relate to economic life. You have somehow discovered this book. Why should you read it? One reason is *to get Christian guilt-manipulators off your back*.[1] There are a lot of them out there. If you are tired of being harassed to give more money to God, even though you already tithe, this book will help. On the other hand, if you do not tithe, then this book can also help you: *to get God off your back*.[2]

Another reason: *to learn more about the biblical basis of riches*. This will help you understand why the West got rich before the rest of the world copied the West. *The West obeyed God's Deuteronomic laws governing ownership*. It also adopted the biblical concept of linear time. The West has reaped an unprecedented reward: compound economic growth that has lasted for over two centuries.

A third reason: *this book constitutes a challenge to Christian antinomians and legalists (often the same people), who are committed to the ideal of the cultural defeat for Christianity in history*. If you are tired of sitting in the back of humanism's bus, or if you think that you may wind up sitting on the back hump of Islam's camel, this book offers hope.

Why is this book so long: a foreword, a preface, an introduction, 76 chapters, a conclusion, plus 10 appendixes? Two reasons. First, because there is a great deal of material on economics in Deuteronomy. Second, because I am going to die before this commentary has much effect on anyone except me.

When an author of innovative or controversial educational books concludes that his influence will not come in his lifetime, he should write in great detail. He should seek to make his work stand the test of time, capable of answering a myriad of questions after he is dead and buried. The author covers more material in greater detail because he will not be around to answer questions. He is appalled by the thought of what happened to Karl Marx: generations of books on what Marx *really* meant. (Note to future commentators on my commentaries: you are certainly entitled to write a book on what North should have meant, but clearly did not.)

Christian philosopher Greg Bahnsen said that doing philosophy is like swimming underwater. So is reading this commentary. It should be read a chapter or two at a time. Then put it aside and think about what you have just read. This book will be read in its entirety by very few people. It is far too long. But it can be read chapter by chapter by people who want insight on a particular passage. Each chapter was written to stand alone. I wrote this book with the assumption that many readers will read only one chapter. Search engines on the World Wide Web will bring people to individual chapters. Perhaps a few people will then read the entire book. I salute you!

A. A Neglected Book

The Book of Deuteronomy is obscure for most Christians. It is an unknown book among Christians in the pews. In the late stages of the first draft of the first edition (1999) of this book, I heard a sermon on the ninth commandment. The pastor cited Deuteronomy 19, the section dealing with the penalty against bearing false witness. The woman next to me whispered to me, "Where is Deuteronomy?" She was a dedicated Christian lady and a teacher in an adult Sunday School. She had just completed a summer school course at a well-known fundamentalist seminary in Texas. For her, Deuteronomy was a closed book, a lost book. She is not alone.

Deuteronomy is not read today. Why not? Because Deuteronomy lays down the law. So does the Book of Exodus, but Exodus contains a lot of historical information in it. Pastors can preach from it without touching on biblical law. Leviticus has a lot of law in it, but there is so much material on the sacrifices and the ceremonies that pastors can preach on Leviticus' many "types" of this or that New Testament theme. They can avoid the law. Like Exodus, Numbers has historical information in it.

Not so with Deuteronomy. From its opening section to the end,

Deuteronomy lays down the law. This is why pastors avoid this book like the plague of biblical leprosy. On every page, it proclaims, "trust and obey, for there's no other way." Protestants sing these words, but they do not believe them. They proclaim: "We're under grace, not law!" They are wrong. They are under humanist civil courts and humanist lawyers. They will remain in this condition of bondage until they discover an explicitly biblical answer to this question: "If not biblical law, then what?"

B. A Resented Book When Understood

Resented? Is this too strong a word? No. This deep-seated resentment is deliberately concealed for reasons of public positioning, but it is there. There is a sense of foreboding about this book, which is followed by resentment. Men resent being called by God to greater service, greater sacrifice, and greater responsibility. This is what Deuteronomy does, for it offers covenant-keepers the possibility of long-term cultural success, including economic success. Christians know the truth: *with greater blessings come greater responsibility*. "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47–48).[3] They resent Deuteronomy because it offers a pathway to personal success and therefore greater personal responsibility, and even worse, from their point of view, a pathway to corporate success and therefore greater corporate responsibility.

I have encountered two rival approaches to the economics of Deuteronomy. The first is resentment by those Christians who believe that the civil government should exercise a significant welfare function in society, meaning the coercive redistribution of wealth through regulation and taxation. This position is well represented by Ronald J. Sider's best-selling first edition of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (1977).[4] Deuteronomy teaches nothing like this. It teaches that private charity should prevail. The second position is resentment regarding the level of economic success that is promised to covenant-keeping societies, for economic success raises inescapable

3. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 28.

4. See Appendix F.

accompanying issues of wealth-creation by covenant-keepers and the degree of leadership in society that their wealth offers them. This position is well represented by Gene A. Getz's book, *A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (1990).

1. Diehl vs. Deuteronomy

A classic statement of resentment against Deuteronomy is found in William Diehl's response to my position paper in *Wealth and Poverty: Four Christian Views* (1984), edited by Robert Clouse, published (and almost immediately suppressed)[5] by InterVarsity Press.[6] Diehl was Keynesian, i.e., a disciple of the homosexual British economist, John Maynard Keynes, who in 1936 attacked the free market as an inefficient institution that is in need of a large centralized civil government in order to provide a system of coercive wealth redistribution to maintain full employment. There is no such scheme of civil government found anywhere in the Bible, and Deuteronomy is expressly hostile to such a concept of civil government. Diehl responded as follows to my brief theonomic defense of the free market:

> That the author is strong on "biblical law" is apparent. The essay provides us with thirty-nine Old Testament citations, of which twenty-three are from the book of Deuteronomy. Alongside these imposing Old Testament references the reader is given only nine New Testament citations, of which only four come from the mouth of Jesus. Notwithstanding one of North's concluding statements that we need "faith in Jesus Christ," this essay might more properly be entitled "Poverty and Wealth according to Deuteronomy." The teachings and parables of Jesus are rich with references to wealth, poverty and justice. Why has the author chosen to ignore these? Can it be that the words of the Master are an embarrassment to the advocates of a free-market system?[7]

The teachings and parables of Jesus are indeed rich with references to wealth, poverty, and justice, but they are not rich with suggestions that the civil government can legitimately tax people at a rate four to nine times greater than the tithe, which is what all modern Western

5. Within a year of publication, with the book selling well enough to provide the four authors and the editor with several hundred dollars each in the first round of royalties, the publisher pulled the book off its list and offered to sell all copies in bulk for 25 cents each. I bought all of them: several thousand copies. I like to think that it was my spirited and heavily exegetical defense of the free market, and my equally spirited critique of the other three authors' less exegetical presentations, that forced the publisher to gag.

6. My paper is reprinted as Appendix E.

7. William E. Diehl, "A Guided-Market Response," in Robert Clouse (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty: Four Christian Views of Economics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 66.

governments have done, beginning with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. (It should also be pointed out that I Samuel 8:10, 14 identify such levels of taxation as tyranny.)

Diehl and men like him have a problem with biblical interpretation. *The words of Jesus are also the words of Moses*. To imply otherwise is to imply that Marcion's second-century defense of a two-gods authorship of the Bible is somehow orthodox. Marcion's position was unorthodox then, and it still is. Was Deuteronomy revealed by some other god than the God of the Bible? No. Is Jesus divine? Yes. So, Mr. Diehl was indulging in a form of rhetoric that was devoid of any clarifying hermeneutic: a reconciliation of Moses and Jesus based on the words of Jesus. *When rhetoric undermines orthodoxy, it should be sacrificed for the sake of orthodoxy*. This is especially true in the case of Mr. Diehl, who, in his attempt to escape the clear teaching of Scripture in favor of private ownership and the free market economy, was reduced to arguing that the Bible really says nothing authoritative regarding economics. "The fact that our Scriptures can be used to support or condemn any economic philosophy suggests that the Bible is not intended to lay out an economic plan which will apply for all times and places. If we are to examine economic structures in the light of Christian teachings, we will have to do it in another way."[8] What way? As he insisted, a way without judicially binding biblical law. In this, he is joined by about a billion other Christians, who are equally hostile to the suggestion that the Bible provides authoritative judicial limits to their dreams and schemes for building the kingdom of man in the name of the kingdom of God.

I ask: What is wrong with Deuteronomy's discussion of the causes of wealth and poverty? There is no other book in the Bible that discusses these related issues in greater detail. God should not be placed in the dock just because Deuteronomy does not conform to the incoherent speculations in Mr. Keynes' *General Theory*.[9]

Sider in 1977 through 1990 was even more committed than Diehl to the ideal of the coercive state as the proper biblical agency of wealth-redistribution. But, in his 1997 edition, he retracted much of his early work and became openly hesitant regarding what, exactly,

8. Diehl, "The Guided-Market System," *ibid*., p. 87.

9. For a coherent critique of one of Mr. Keynes' disciples, a Calvinist, see Ian Hodge, *Baptized Inflation: A Critique of "Christian" Keynesianism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986) This is a critique of Douglas Vickers, *Economics and Man* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1976).

the Bible has to say about economics.[10]

2. Getz on Material Possessions

Gene Getz was a dispensationalist. He therefore believed in a radical separation of the Old Testament from the New Testament. His theology distinguished sharply between the church in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. He taught at Dallas Theological Seminary in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when that school was still defending the founder's version of dispensationalism. This was a decade and a half before "progressive dispensationalism" replaced the older version at Dallas. (In 1988, Dallas stopped publishing the founder's 8-volume *Systematic Theology*.) He had previously taught for two decades at Moody Bible Institute, the premier undergraduate dispensational academic institution of higher learning. In 1972, Rev. Getz founded the Fellowship Bible Church. It was there that he wrote his book, *A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*.[11] This book was the culmination of a career of teaching.

He confined his study mainly to the New Testament. He therefore quietly assumed away most of the Bible. I would not call his book "*Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark," as the traditional barb puts it. I would rather call it "*Julius Caesar* without the Roman Empire." Specifically, it is Jesus without Moses.

His is a common error. Indeed, it is the most common error in Christendom. It is an important aspect of Protestantism's denial of Christendom. This began with Martin Luther in 1517. Luther was not content to deny Roman Catholicism's claim to represent Christendom. He went much further: to deny Christendom as a concept. He was an ethical dualist.[12] He promoted the idea of Bible-free natural law for non-Christian political systems and an inner spiritual release from the law for the redeemed.[13] As for Christendom, it was for Luther a myth, for the only way to build a Bible-based society by rejecting natural law theory and using only the Bible would be to invoke Old Testament law. He denied that this methodology is valid. He therefore denied the legitimacy of the ideal of Christendom. Most Protestants have followed his lead.

Rev. Getz was in this tradition. But there is a difference: he was not

10. See Appendix F.

11. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press.

12. Charles Trinkaus, "The Religious Foundations of Luther's Social Views," in John H. Mundy, *et al., Essays in Medieval Life* (Cheshire, Connecticut: Biblo & Tannen, 1955), pp. 71–87.

13. Chapters 8 and 17.

explicitly an ethical dualist. He was an ethical dualist by default when it comes to civil government, for he never discussed its God-imposed limits. This dualism is implicit and not readily observable to readers who share it, which is most of them.

He spent over 400 pages in discussing New Testament passages that deal with wealth and poverty, or as he called them, material possessions. His Scripture index reveals his hermeneutic: two pages from the Old Testament and 11 pages from the New Testament. Yet he called his book *A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*. This is false advertising. It should have been called *A New Testament Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*. Seminaries that teach biblical theology offer an OTBT course and an NTBT course. Instructors and students understand the difference in scope. Rev. Getz's readers do not. He wrote his book knowing full well that he nowhere solved the hermeneutical problem of reconciling and integrating the two fields of academic biblical theology. But, in this deliberate, self-conscious neglect, he is not unique. Entire seminary and Christian college faculties suffer from the same refusal to deal with this crucial hermeneutical issue: the reconciliation of the testaments.

Getz's book is over 400 pages long. It presents 126 "supracultural principles" of stewardship or ownership.[14] All of them are taken from the New Testament. As a group, they deal with these themes: the spiritual danger of wealth, the necessity of Christians' giving charity, and the insecurity of wealth. Not one of these principles affirms the morally binding law of tithing, which he specifically said is no longer binding in the New Covenant era.[15] He left everything to the individual conscience. "Every Christian is ultimately responsible to give to God on the basis of his own heart decision."[16] If this is true, then pastors are reduced, as Getz was reduced, to arguing that God wants individuals to give more than they are presently giving. These pastors must spend their entire careers begging for money, as I have argued elsewhere.[17] The become beggars for Jesus.

The New Testament does not identify widespread blessings, including wealth, as the products of national obedience to God's law: the teaching of Deuteronomy 28:1–14. This explicitly covenantal view

14. Gene A. Getz, *Biblical Theology of Material Possesions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), ch. 39.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

17. Gary North, *Tithing and the Church* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994), ch. 4.

of economic prosperity and poverty is found in the Old Testament, but not in the New Testament. This means one of three things: (1) the New Covenant authors assumed the continuation of the Old Covenant's judicial foundation of wealth and poverty (the theonomists' view); (2) the New Covenant has no official explanation for wealth and poverty, and is generally hostile to personal riches (pietism's view); or (3) the New Covenant has broken with the Old Covenant, and is unquestionably hostile to wealth (Sider's published view before 1997).

Getz was a pietist. He pressed Christians to make personal economic decisions, not on the basis of biblical law, but rather on the basis of their feelings. He had nothing to say about the state's role in establishing justice as one foundation of economic growth. All he said about the state was this: (1) Christians have an obligation to pay their taxes;[18] (2) it is a fortunate thing that the state's welfare programs have reduced the burden on churches for supporting the poor.[19]

Getz said explicitly that Deuteronomy 28's view of wealth and poverty is the Old Testament's teaching.[20] Then he did his best to distance himself from the Old Testament's specifics. He threw out Deuteronomy 28, justifying this jettisoning of biblical revelation on the basis of cultural differences. He cited someone named Willingale in the *New Bible Dictionary* (Eerdmans, 1962).

> Willingale reminds us that this unique economic setting in Israel "changes in the New Testament." Israel now existed in a totally diffrent situation culturally and economically. The Jews had to adapt their laws to a commercial economy.[21]

Why I am supposed to take seriously Willingale's observation is beyond me. Willingale's view rests on preposterous assumption: that the Jews in the era of the Mosaic law did not participate in a commercial economy until after the Monarchy. Speaking of the conquest generation, Getz wrote: "Because of God's material provisions for the children of Israel, there was no need to establish businesses based upon a free enterprise system. Rather, they were able to make a living

18. Getz, *Material Possessions*, pp. 255–56.

19. "First, the church should make sure there are no other sources of support—including assistance from various governmental agencies. If people in need have access to welfare systems, they should use those resources to the full. This was not possible for widows in the first-century world, but fortunately, it is possible in many countries today." *Ibid.*, p. 317.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

21. *Idem.*

from the land they had received free from indebtedness."[22] This statement boggles the imagination. First, he implicitly defined business as exclusively urban. He had no conception of agriculture as a business, or other rural occupations as businesses. Second, he conveniently ignored the 48 Levitical cities (Num. 35:7). Third, Israel was located on one of the most important trade routes of the ancient world: the road between Egypt and Babylon, with ports on the Mediterranean. The Old Testament is filled with laws governing commerce. But, having created a true straw man—Old Covenant business as urban—Getz made his break with Deuteronomic law.

> *Interpretation and Application Today*. The challenge twentieth-century Christians face is to interpret these Old Testament teachings without transplanting Old Testament law into another cultural setting in a legalistic, literal fashion.[23]

This is the standard pietistic line: the Mosaic law as *legalistic* when applied *literally* to the New Covenant era. Somehow, it must be applied spiritually, meaning non-literally. But on what basis can anyone draw such a conclusion regarding a specific Mosaic law? Using what hermeneutic (principle of interpretation)? The pietists never say. However, in order to evade the accusation of being what they obviously are—antinomians—they hasten to add statements such as these: "At the same time, we must not bypass the spirit of these laws. Though designed for Israel, they yield timeless principles that are supracultural, for, as we will see, they are affirmed by New Testament teaching."[24] This is *pietistic gush* unless it is accompanied by a principle of interpretation that enables us to discover the timeless principle in a now-annulled Mosaic law. Getz offered no such principle.

Getz did not again refer to Deuteronomy's covenantal laws governing economic growth, nor did he show that any principle in the New Testament relates covenant-keeping to wealth. This law of wealth does not appear in his list of 126 supracultural principles. He never offered one word of encouragement regarding the covenantal legitimacy of great wealth as a blessing of God. His entire book is one long call for people to give more money to the local church, although he refused to specify what percentage. Having abandoned the tithe as a judicial principle, he substituted guilt-manipulation.

Getz was to Christian financial guilt-manipulation on behalf of

22. *Idem*.
23. *Ibid*., pp. 265–66.
24. *Ibid*., p. 266.

the local church what Sider was for Christian financial guilt-manipulation on behalf of the state and the United Nations. I define Christian guilt-manipulation as preaching that makes Christians feel guilty for not having given enough to the poor, despite the fact that the preacher chooses not to point to any biblical law that the victims have broken, such as the law of the tithe. Getz denied the law of the tithe. Sider called for something called a "graduated tithe" extracted by compulsion by the state.[25] This is *open-ended guilt* that no specific act of sacrifice can overcome. The guilt is open-ended because its institutional context is antinomianism.[26]

Getz, like Sider, did not accept the explicitly biblical basis of legitimate riches: covenant-keeping. He discussed the reduction of poverty only in terms of charitable giving by Christians and hard work by recipients, never in terms of job-creating investments by Christians and other profit-seeking capitalists. His footnotes and his bibliography reveal no awareness of David Chilton's *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators* (1981) or E. Calvin Beisner's *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* (1988).[27] But, far more important than this, he ignored the Old Testament's revelation that undergirds these two books. For him, the Mosaic law is irrelevant except as some sort of handy-dandy, non-binding grab-bag of examples for some vague process called "the spirit of these laws."

Of what practical, institutional use is a concept of "the spirit of these laws" without either the laws or their mandated sanctions? For example, what would Rev. Getz say if he caught one of his parishioners having sex with a pig? Maybe this: "Joe, you really aren't entering into the true spirit of God's law." What could he say to this response? "If there is no New Testament law against it, then I'll pick my partners as I choose. It's just a matter of taste, after all. This is how my spirit leads me. The New Testament era is different from the culture of Mosaic Israel. After all, Reverend, you wrote it yourself: 'This Old Testament law and others like it must be interpreted in its cultural setting.'[28] Well, the law against bestiality I interpret as 'others like it.' Who is to say I'm wrong? Put up or shut up, Reverend."

In defending a hermeneutic of the Mosaic law's authority as cul-

25. Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity, 1977), pp. 175ff.

26. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), ch. 56.

27. Both published by Crossway Books.

28. Getz, *Material Possessions*, p. 266.

ture-based and therefore mutable, Getz is not alone. This is why I have used the same case-law example of deviant animal husbandry in response to a faculty member of Westminster Seminary.[29] Getz's antinomian hermeneutic is not unique to dispensationalism, which at least has an explanation, however weak exegetically, for the total judicial discontinuity between the Testaments: the absolute separation of Mosaic law from the so-called Church Age or "Great Parenthesis." All schools of theology except theonomy presume the general principle of judicial discontinuity. This is why theologians, one and all, resent Deuteronomy. This is why they also resent theonomy and its implication, Christian reconstruction. In this hostility, they are joined by theological liberals and humanists.

3. Pietism vs. Responsibility

There are pietistic Bible commentators who argue that the dominion covenant made with Adam was pre-Fall and therefore does not apply to history. An example is the then-tiny and now even tinier premillennial fundamentalist denomination, the Bible Presbyterian Church, which declared in 1970 that the cultural mandate (the Dutch Reformed version of the dominion covenant) has no authority in history, but is exclusively pre-Fall and post-final judgment. Genesis 1:26–28[30] and Genesis 9 have nothing to do with culture, they insisted. The passages apply only to biological reproduction. Genesis 9 does not use the words "and subdue it," and therefore the passage has nothing to do with culture in history. The idea of the cultural mandate "cuts the nerve of true missionary work and of evangelism."[31]

For pietists, true missionary work and evangelism apply only to individual souls, denominational reform (i.e., separatism's endless church splits), and the establishment of Christian families. Culture in general is in principle handed over to the devil and his earthly agents. The dominion covenant is said to remain right where it was immediately after Adam's Fall: under Satan's authority. This means that the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ in history have had no effect on Adam's rebellious transfer of allegiance to Satan in history. Culture is seen as outside of Christ's redemption. So,

29. Gary North, *Westminster's Confession: The Abandonment of Van Til's Legacy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), pp. 211–14.

30. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

31. For the complete document and its refutation, see R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), pp. 723–30.

the Great Commission has to do with souls, not culture. The Great Commission is really not so great. It is highly limited.[32]

Why do Christians defend such a truncated view of the gospel? *Because they want to restrict their personal responsibility for engaging in comprehensive social reform*. The idea of the dominion covenant appalls them, for it makes them responsible for politics, culture, and everything else. They want to go through life as minor figures without responsibility in a world legitimately dominated by covenant-breakers. They prefer not to think about the possibility that God has called His people to subdue the earth for His glory, and has provided biblical laws to enable His people to obey Him. They prefer to adopt natural law theory on the assumption that covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers can agree on fundamental cultural and civil law and, once agreed, that covenant-breakers can run things. All the pietist wants is immunity from covenant-breakers. But covenant-breakers do not offer them immunity. They want control. They take seriously the dominion covenant. They just don't take God's law seriously. They share the same hostility to God's law with the pietists.

Pietists pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven," with one of two mental escape clauses: (1) to be fulfilled after the second coming, during the millennial reign of Christ, bodily, over a top-down international bureaucracy (premillennialism); (2) to be fulfilled after the final judgment, when sinners are permanently separated from saints (amillennialism). In both cases, the implication is the same: "not my responsibility."

C. Higher Critics and Their Baptized Agents

Higher critics of the Bible argue that Moses did not write the Pentateuch. These five books were supposedly written centuries later by ecclesiastical officials inside the land. That is to say, higher critics implicitly argue that the Book of Deuteronomy is a pack of lies that was written and rewritten over the centuries by a series of highly dedicated and highly skilled forgers. But, being mild-mannered academics as well as wolves in sheep's clothing, the critics do not use such words as "lies," "forgers," and "deception." They prefer such sophisticated terms as "myths," "redactors," and "*weltanschauung*."[33]

32. For a refutation, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

33. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), Appendix H: "Conspiracy, Forg-

One argument against the higher critics is the integration of the five books of Moses. The Pentateuch is a remarkable structure. How did hordes of redactors re-write the Pentateuch, line by line, without undermining the integration of the five books? How was it that this structure, which generations of higher critics failed to perceive, was understood by each of the redactors? How was it that generations of tiny revisions maintained this covenant structure, which was invisible to academic specialists—even Germans!—until the work of George Mendenhall in the mid-1950s?[34]

The Pentateuch is structured in terms of a covenant. The five books of Moses parallel the five-point biblical covenant.[35] This structure defines covenant theology.[36] The structure is clearest within the Book of Deuteronomy: transcendence (1:1–5); hierarchy (1:6–4:49); ethics (5–26); sanctions (27–30); and continuity (31–34).[37] The book's five-point structure is widely acknowledged by scholars specializing in the Old Testament. James Jordan divides the book into five parts: (1) steward as vice-gerent, (2) new cosmos,[38] (3) Moses' sermon on the Ten Commandments, (4) implementation, and (5) succession.[39] This five-point model also governs the structure of Exodus[40] and Leviticus,[41] as well as the Ten Commandments[42] and the five sacrifices of Leviticus.[43]

This covenantal structure was common to Hittite treaties in the second millennium, B.C. This was Mendenhall's point and Kline's. If the Book of Deuteronomy was put into its final form in, say, the seventh century B.C., how was it that it was structured in terms of a

ery, and Higher Criticism."

34. George Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Biblical Colloquium, 1955).

35. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, General Introduction.

36. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010).

37. This is Sutton's version of Meredith Kline's proposed structure. Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 48–49; Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), pp. 21, 41, 59, 77, 96.

38. Two sets of five points each (1:6–46; 2:1–4:40).

39. James B. Jordan, *Covenant Sequence in Leviticus and Deuteronomy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 4.

40. Sovereign God (1–17), judicial appeals courts (18), laws (21–23:13), oath (23–24), and inheritance (25–40). North, *Authority and Dominion*, Appendix S:C:1.

41. Sacrifices (1–7), priestly cleansing (8–16), laws of separation (17–22), covenant-renewal festivals and covenant-breaking acts (23–24), and inheritance (25–27). North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, Introduction to Part I, Section B:1.

42. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion*.

43. North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, Preface, Section B.

treaty structure in wide use almost a thousand years earlier?

Despite this obvious problem, professedly conservative Bible commentaries still promote some version of higher criticism. The *New Bible Dictionary*, co-published by InterVarsity Press in England and Tyndale House in the United States, asserts: "But none of these statements permits the conclusion that Deuteronomy as we have it today came completely, or even in large measure, from Moses himself. One has to allow for editorial activity and adaptations of original Mosaic material to a later age."[44] Let me translate this into non-Ph.D. English: "One has to allow for post-Mosaic forgeries by non-inspired charlatans who adapted the original Mosaic material according to the interests, information, and perspectives of their age, fooling the likes of you, my academically uncertified Christian reader, generation after generation." The author says as much: "However, it became necessary in new situations to represent the words of Moses and to show their relevance for a new day."[45] Then he escalated his rhetoric: "While there seems little reason to deny that a substantial part [which part?] of Deuteronomy was in existence some centuries [how many?] before the seventh century BC, it is not possible [for humanist-certified Christian scholars] to say how much of it comprises the *ipsissima verba* of Moses himself."[46] How impressive: *ipsissima verba*. I would call his language *struttissima verba*. "Hey, all you untrained bumpkins out there who still believe in the inspired word of God, who still believe in the words of Jesus, which identified the author of the law as Moses. You don't have a Ph.D. issued by some secular university. You poor, pathetic people are struggling to earn a living, while we Christian academics live off of your tithes, your offerings, or maybe even your taxes through a tax-funded university faculty. Personally, I live off of public tax money. See what we can do! We can undermine your faith at your expense. We can toss around Latin phrases. I guess that shows you what we are." Yes, it does. And also what they believe: "Hath God said?"

Thoughtful people who, in a century or a millennium from now, may reflect on why the twentieth century was almost devoid of Bible commentaries that were confident in the cultural relevance of the Bible, or in principles drawn from the Bible, or in the probable success of the gospel in transforming culture, need only consider the emasculating effects of such prevarications as we find in *The New Bible*

44. "Deuteronomy, Book of," *New Bible Commentary*, p. 283.
45. *Idem*.
46. *Ibid*., p. 284.

Commentary, written for educated laymen by humanist-trained and humanist-certified academic evangelicals. Cautious Christian authors refused to use words that reflect what they were really saying. Forgers in retrospect become "editors." Revisions made centuries later by these clever and unscrupulous forgers become "relevance for a new day." The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible becomes a mishmash of "fragments." The Bible as delivered to the saints becomes a grab-bag of updates, revisions, and improvements on the revealed word of God. The timeless authority of the Bible is jettisoned for the timely authority of academic relevance. The word of man triumphs in history, revision by revision, leaving saints in every age without an inspired anchor linking heaven and earth, eternity and time. Man is thereby unchained covenantally, which is what covenant-breaking man since Adam has wanted to be. Twentieth-century evangelical churches were deeply compromised with modernism's pagan culture, rarely more visibly or more dangerously than in the Christian college and seminary classroom. So far, the twenty-first century has not changed this situation. But it is just beginning.

D. The Economics of the Pentateuch

I began writing my economic commentary on the Bible in the spring of 1973. In August of 1977, I went into high gear: 10 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. I have invested over 16,000 hours in this writing project since 1977. With the completion of the Pentateuch, I reached the end of phase one of this project in 1999.

No one before me had bothered to write an economic commentary of the Pentateuch. A major reason for this neglect was that there has never been any demand for such a Bible-based study. Academic economists are methodological atheists, which includes Christian economists. Both groups search for social truths through supposedly value-neutral reason. Economists are not willing to re-think their academic specialties in terms of the assumption of the final authority of the Bible. They do not re-structure the received wisdom of their academic disciplines in terms of biblical revelation.

I wrote this commentary, above all, because I was curious about what God's law says about economics. I had to do the exegetical work to find out, since no one else ever had. I learn best by research and writing. It has taken a large investment of time for me to find out.

Why do I think an economic commentary on the Bible is important? Six reasons. First, it is important for God's people to understand

what the Bible has to say in every area of life. The church cannot bring an effective covenant lawsuit against society if its members do not know what the Bible says is wrong, legally and morally, with every area of society. Sin reigns wherever God's law doesn't. To reduce sin, we must extend the rule of God's law by means of God's grace. God's law is as comprehensive as sin. So is God's redemption.[47] When empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians can use the law to overcome progressively the rule of sin in every nook and cranny in which it reigns. God's Bible-revealed law is Christendom's unique tool of dominion.

There I go again, using a naughty word: *Christendom*. Most Protestants for over a century have not used it in public except as a pejorative. Christendom implies that the city of God can have visible manifestations in history—in the church ("well, of course"), the family ("OK, we can accept that"), and the state ("Wait a minute—that sounds like theocracy to us!").

I could ask the typical Bible-affirming Christian: Is there sin in personal life, the area of self-government? His answer: "Yes." Then what is the solution? Answer: "God's grace and God's . . . uh, hmmm; oh, yes, God's *principles*!" (This sounds a lot safer theologically than God's *law*.) I am not exaggerating. Rev. Getz refused to use the phrase "biblical law." He substituted the academic mouthful, "supracultural principle." I suggest that nobody uses a word like "supracultural" who does not have a hidden agenda. Rev. Getz's hidden agenda was to keep his readers from accepting the concept of an authoritative biblical law-order that is set forth in both the Old Testament and the New Testament and is therefore still binding in the New Testament era, including the "Church Age" or "Great Parenthesis," as dispensationalists call it.

What about sin in the church, the area of church government? What is the solution? "God's grace and God's principles!" What about sin in the family, the area of family government? Solution? "God's grace and God's principles!" What about the state, the area of civil government? "Democracy and natural law!" This is pietism's confession: fundamentalist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian.

A second reason why this commentary is important is that there is a positive relationship between corporate obedience to God's law and

47. Gary North, I*s the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C: "Comprehensive Redemption: A Theology for Social Action."

corporate success in history (Deut. 28:1–14). This positive relationship is denied by anti-theonomists, most notably Meredith G. Kline. My goal is to persuade Christians to begin obeying God's Bible-revealed law in preparation for preaching it, enforcing it, and benefiting from it.

Third, I want this economic commentary to serve as a model for other practical and theoretical Bible commentaries in the various social sciences.

Fourth, I am tired of hearing the Christian scholar's familiar slogan, "The Bible isn't a textbook in [my academic discipline]," the discipline in which he was formally certified by humanists in some institution of higher learning, and for which he is a mouthpiece for a baptized version of humanism's conclusions. The Bible is indeed not a textbook. But it does provide the governing interpretation and many facts necessary for writing accurate textbooks.

Fifth, I want to write a treatise someday on Christian economics as a first step in restructuring the Christian curriculum. To do thus, I first must know what the Bible says about economics. The Pentateuch was the place to start: the law.

E. Time for a Change

There is a sixth reason. I am convinced that P. A. Sorokin was correct two generations ago: the West is facing a monumental breakdown.[48] We live in a culture which rests on the humanistic presupposition that anything that cannot be touched, measured, or manipulated by scientific techniques is not socially relevant. Sorokin called the product of this outlook "sensate culture." No society can survive indefinitely that holds such a view of cause and effect, he said.

The world's division of labor will collapse if there is a breakdown in the means of payment: bank credit money. If this happens, there will be a worldwide economic disaster. In the aftermath of such a disaster, not to mention during it, Christians will be among the local competitors for social and political influence.

There are others threats: a plague that cannot be suppressed by antibiotics, biological warfare, nuclear war, and warfare against the electronic infrastructure, such as EMP (electromagnetic pulsation). All of these threaten the international division of labor. All of them threaten the debt system. This means that the banks are threatened from outside the financial system as well as from inside.

48. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (Oxford, England: Oneworld, [1941] 1992).

If we avoid all this, we will still face the bankruptcy of tax-funded social welfare programs for the aged. Charities will have to pick up the slack Christians are not ready for this huge increase of responsibility, but it is coming anyway.

During the crisis period, I expect theonomy to receive a wider hearing among Christians, who will be facing that ancient political problem: "You can't beat something with nothing."

I now possess a monopoly: an economic commentary on the Bible. Maybe I can at long last generate some demand at something above zero price.

Here is the looming social problem, in the words of real estate master investor Jack Miller: "Voters will call for a man on a white horse, and there are a lot of guys out there with brown horses and whitewash." To distinguish accurately between white horses and whitewashed horses, we need to have a model for white horses (Rev. 19:14). The Bible provides this model: biblical law. The problem is, this model is found mainly in the Old Testament. Christians today prefer leaders on whitewashed brown horses to the Old Testament.

Conclusion

I think sections of my multi-volume commentary will still be read in a hundred years, though not read by many. Its temporal longevity is easy to secure, because there is one advantage that commentaries possess over other books: they help pastors interpret difficult Bible passages. The Pentateuch has many difficult passages. This, plus the World Wide Web, will keep this commentary "in print."

This book is long because it is a Bible commentary relating to a specialized area. A standard Bible commentary comments—or should—on every passage. It cannot include much information about any one passage. This commentary is different. It is designed to convey extensive knowledge about a few verses that relate to the topic at hand: economics. The reader is seeking more information per passage than a standard commentary can provide. This book can be read cover to cover, even if it has no covers, but it is designed to be read one chapter at a time. I assume that a pastor who is preaching on one passage wants information on this passage and no other, for today. The same is true of a reader who reads a passage and wants to see if it has any economic implications. This is the reason why the book is repetitive. I assume that most people will not read it straight through, and even if they do, they will forget what I say about a specific pas-

sage. They will come back to this book, if at all, for clarification regarding one passage. A Bible commentary should meet the needs of readers who are seeking clarification, one passage at a time.

I also offer a warning: those Christians who continue to chant the academic mantra, "There's no such thing as Christian economics," have their work cut out for them. They have a lot of reading to do. So far, they have done very little reading. To all of them, I say, using an analogy from basketball, "The ball is in your end of the court." The fact is, it has been for a couple of decades.

Until you see evidence that at least one of my critics has done his homework in the exposition of biblical texts and economic theory, whose Bible citations and footnotes reflect this, and who has offered a coherent refutation of what I have written, with footnotes to my economic commentary on the Bible, you would be wise not to take their mantra seriously. *There really is such a thing as Christian economics*. It is part of the church's inheritance.

With every inheritance comes responsibility. The church today prefers to forfeit its lawful inheritance for the sake of avoiding any additional responsibility. This is true in almost every area of life and especially every area of academic specialization. Result: the church is a convenient public doormat for humanists, who laugh at it in derision, yet also fear it. The church is growing worldwide. Humanism is in retreat everywhere, especially the nation-state. If the church ever claims its full inheritance and begins to apply it, the cultural tide will shift: in science, politics, economics, and education. This, the humanists fear. Sadly, so do most Christians.

PREFACE

> *And the* Lord *heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the* Lord. *Also the* Lord *was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 1:34–39

The language of inheritance appears early in the Book of Deuteronomy. Inheritance is the integrating theme of the entire book, as I shall argue in this commentary. Inheritance is the transfer of lawful ownership at the death or departure[1] of the testator. I contend that *economic theory is primarily the social science of ownership*. I define economics as follows:

> **Economics is *the science of covenantal stewardship*: the administration of resources that have been assigned by God, the cosmic Owner, to a person or group, which then leads to an increase, a decrease, or no change in the resources' value in God's estimation and also in the estimation of other stewards.**

I begin with God. *Christian economics is theocentric*. The archetypical passage on economics in the Bible is Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30;[2] Luke 19:12–15[3]).

A. The Covenantal Structure of the Pentateuch

Inheritance and Dominion is the culmination of my two-fold, multi-volume assertion that (1) the biblical covenant has five points, and (2) the Pentateuch is structured in terms of the biblical covenant. I did not

recognize this when I began writing this series of economic commentaries in 1973. I recognized it only in late 1985, when Ray Sutton first presented his study of the covenant in a series of Wednesday evening Bible studies. I argued for this five-point structure of the Pentateuch in my "General Introduction to *The Dominion Covenant* (1987)," published in the second edition of *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis*.[4] The biblical covenant has five parts: the transcendence/presence of God; man's hierarchy/authority under God; ethics/law as the basis of covenant-keeping man's dominion in history, i.e., the visible extension of the boundaries of God's kingdom; oath/sanctions as the basis of cause and effect in history; and succession in history through corporate covenant renewal.[5] The acronym for this structure is THEOS. If this argument is correct, then the fifth book of the Pentateuch should match the fifth point of the covenant: inheritance/disinheritance, a two-fold process in history which mirrors the dual covenantal sanctions of blessing and cursing.

Let us survey briefly the primary integrating theme of each of the Pentateuch's five books. Genesis reveals the absolute sovereignty of God in creating the world out of nothing and sustaining it in history. Exodus reveals the deliverance of national Israel in history by this sovereign God, who requires His people to covenant with Him as His lawful subjects (Ex. 19). Leviticus reveals the laws of God for Mosaic Israel: the stipulations of Israel's national existence as a covenantal unit. Numbers reveals God's corporate sanctions in history: against Israel in the wilderness because of unbelief, and against the Amorites a generation later, outside the borders of Canaan, in the months preceding the invasion of Canaan. Deuteronomy is the book of inheritance through covenant renewal, revealing the imminent fulfillment of the promised Abrahamic inheritance, which involved the disinheritance of the Canaanites.

The reader is hereby warned: if, after reading this commentary, you find that you agree with my thesis that the primary theme of Deuteronomy is inheritance, then you should be more willing to accept my thesis that the Pentateuch is structured in terms of the five-point biblical covenant model.

This commentary series is called *An Economic Commentary on the*

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1987] 2012), General Introduction, Section F.

5. On the five points, see Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992).

Bible. My general thesis for all of these volumes is that both economic theory and practice are inherently covenantal. I titled the first volume, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis*. I argued there that God's covenant with Adam (Gen. 1:26–28) defines mankind. This thesis has led me to argue that the fundamental economic issue is not scarcity, contrary to virtually all economics textbooks. *The fundamental economic issue is* ***ownership***. The issue of ownership is always covenantal. The legal question, "Who owns this?" is more fundamental than the economists' initial question: "Why do I have to pay something to obtain this?"

To answer the question, "Who owns this?" we must first answer the question: "Who possesses original sovereignty?"

B. Original Sovereignty

Economists should begin the study of economics with a question: Who is originally sovereign? The Bible's answer is clear: God. He created the world. He therefore possesses *original jurisdiction*. Through the rebellious actions of the serpent, Eve, and Adam, Satan gained subordinate control over the earth. Adam, as God's supreme covenantal agent, had the authority to decide which sovereign he would serve. By disobeying God, he transferred allegiance to Satan. This was an act of covenant-breaking. It was also a judicially representative act: he did this in the name of his heirs. Those heirs of Adam who remain outside of God's covenant of redemption necessarily deny the ownership claims of God.

It is covenant-keeping man's God-given assignment to extend the kingdom of God in history, reclaiming territory that was lost by Adam's transfer of covenantal allegiance. This reclaiming of the earth is a two-fold activity: fulfilling the original dominion covenant (Gen. 1:26–28) and reclaiming the lost inheritance from covenant-breakers. We redeem this property—buy it back—just as Christ redeemed us from the wrath of God. We redeem this world as delegated stewards under Christ's general ownership, as both the Creator of the world (Col. 1:16) and as its Redeemer. But, because of His comprehensive redemption, we now operate not merely as stewards, but as adopted sons (Gal. 4:5–8). Our stewardship is our means of establishing our post-final-judgment inheritance, as the parable of the talents says. There is continuity between history and eternity.

> For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus

> Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (I Cor. 3:11–15).[6]

Ultimately, Satan will be disinherited in history. To argue otherwise is to argue that Adam's transfer to Satan of Adam's God-given stewardship over the kingdom of God is a permanent condition in history. The eschatological assumption of Satan's triumphant reign in history also necessarily assumes that Jesus Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20)[7]—reclaiming the world by means of the Holy Spirit-empowered gospel of redemption (buying-back)—will produce only a series of sporadic Christian oases in the historically permanent desert of Satanism. It is to argue that biblical eschatology teaches that Adam's inheritance in history was permanently transferred to Satan, irrespective of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in history and for history. This outlook transfers almost all of the covenant-keepers' lawful inheritance to the world beyond the grave. It makes men's cultural inheritance an *either/or* proposition: either history or eternity. It denies what the Bible teaches: inheritance is a *both/and* proposition. It is inheritance in both history and eternity for covenant-keepers, and disinheritance in both history and eternity for covenant-breakers.[8]

C. Eschatology and Inheritance

This theme of inheritance/disinheritance is basic to covenantal progression in history: the growth of the kingdom of God at the expense of the kingdom of Satan. In this sense, covenantal conflict is what economists call a *zero-sum game*: the winner's gains come at the expense of the loser. Because of God's common grace,[9] this is not always true in cultural matters. Through the division of labor, covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers can simultaneously expand their

6. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 3.

7. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990). North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 48.

8. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997).

9. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

respective spheres of influence. There can be win-win arrangements in history between both camps. The obvious example is population growth. But in the supernatural battle for an individual soul, covenantal conflict is a pure zero-sum conflict. One kingdom expands at the expense of the other.

This covenantal fact of life and death raises the issue of eschatology. The theological doctrine known as *eschatology*—the doctrine of the last things—is point five of the biblical covenant model. It cannot be separated from a theory of history, because eschatology is also the doctrine of *whatever precedes* the last things. It is, in this sense, the doctrine of the next-to-last things. Because there are three rival theories of biblical eschatology—amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism—each has a different conception of the next-to-last things. Each theory has its own conception of social theory, i.e., social cause and effect.[10]

Biblical eschatology is the story of the replacement of Satan's stolen kingdom by God's kingdom. The eschatological question that divides theologians is this: To what extent is this process of kingdom replacement revealed in history? Is history an earnest—a down payment—on the eternity to come? Is there considerable or minimal continuity between history and eternity? Does the wheat or do the tares progressively dominate as history unfolds? *Amillennialism* insists that history is a reverse foretaste of eternity: the righteous get weaker, and the unrighteous get stronger. *Premillennialism* teaches the same with regard to the era prior to Christ's bodily return and His imposition of a comprehensive international bureaucracy, staffed by Christians, for a thousand years. *Postmillennialism* insists that covenantal history is the story of the lawful transfer of inheritance, secured by the death of the lawful Heir, who thereby has become the Testator (Heb. 9:16–17). For postmillennialism, history is also the story of disinheritance in history: covenant-keepers' reclaiming of the stolen legacy from covenant- breakers. Righteousness will replace unrighteousness as the next-to-the-last things unfold.

10. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

D. Social Theory and Eschatology

The fifth point of the biblical covenant model is succession.[11] The fifth point is judicially connected to the fourth: sanctions.[12] Corporate sanctions are applied by God in history in terms of point three: law.[13] Any discussion of biblical law that ignores corporate sanctions and succession is incomplete. Any discussion that self-consciously separates sanctions and succession is incorrect.

Succession is an aspect of eschatology. The eschatological question regarding history is this: *Who shall inherit the earth*? The Bible is clear: covenant-keepers.

> His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (Ps. 25:13).
>
> For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9).
>
> But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps. 37:11).
>
> For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off (Ps. 37:22).
>
> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).[14]

This eschatological outlook is denied by premillennialists and amillennialists. This is why they have a major problem with the Book of Deuteronomy, the premier book of inheritance in the Old Testament. To deal with this book, they have to argue that the corrosive effects of sin always lead men to break the covenant and lose the inheritance. This is why covenant-keepers supposedly will not inherit the earth. The problem with this argument is two-fold: (1) it necessarily makes covenant-breakers the inheritors, thereby denying the plain teaching of Scripture; (2) it relegates the New Testament doctrines of the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ to the realm of eschatological *adiaphora*—things indifferent to the faith.

E. Methodological Starting Point: Scarcity or Ownership?

In my 1987 book, *Inherit the Earth: Biblical Blueprints for Economics*, I began with the first point of the covenant: God's transcendence, yet also His presence. In economic theory, this principle is manifested in

11. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 5.
12. *Ibid.*, ch. 4.
13. *Ibid.*, ch. 3.
14. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 4.

the concept of God's original ownership. Point two, hierarchy-representation, is applied in economics by the concept of God's delegated but restricted ownership of property to individuals and organizations: stewardship. Point three, boundaries, is applied in economics by the concept of landmarks or fences. Point four, profit or loss, is the basis for evaluating success or failure. Finally, point five, inheritance, is the economic issue of economic growth.

1. Adam Smith on Private Property

Humanistic free market economists traditionally begin their analyses with the issue of scarcity. This has been true ever since Adam Smith wrote *Wealth of Nations* (1776). They begin here for an unstated but powerful reason: their quest for epistemological neutrality. They begin with what appears to be a common-ground observation about the external world, an observation that is universally acknowledged and therefore presumably neutral epistemologically. They seek to avoid any appeal to theology or other obviously value-laden presuppositions. The issue of scarcity is not epistemologically neutral. It is heavily value-laden, but it is far easier to conceal this fact than to conceal the more obviously value-laden doctrine of original ownership.

After I read Tom Bethell's 1998 book, *The Noblest Triumph*, I recognized how inappropriate Smith's starting point was. Bethell made the neglected point that Smith generally ignored the concept of private property in *Wealth of Nations*. Bethell wrote, "there is very little that is directly about property in *The Wealth of Nations*. The few paragraphs on the subject are extraneous to Smith's argument."[15] Smith's oversight enabled socialists, beginning with William Godwin in his book, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), to focus on ownership as the central issue: the failure of private ownership and the goal of state ownership. There was no full-scale intellectual defense of private property as the linchpin of rational economic analysis until Ludwig von Mises wrote his path-breaking essay, "Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth" (1920). Mises extended his analysis in his 1922 book, *Socialism*, presenting it in final form in *Human Action* (1949). Thus, almost two centuries passed between Smith's neglect of private property until Mises' comprehensive theoretical defense of economic theory as grounded in private ownership. It was not until the political and economic collapse of the bankrupt Soviet Union in

15. Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity through the Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), p. 97.

1991 that socialist economists quietly retired from the field of intellectual battle.

When would-be autonomous man begins his discussion of economics apart from any consideration of the twin doctrines of creation and providence, he has assumed as incontrovertible what he needs first to prove, namely, that the creation is an autonomous "given," and that man is also an autonomous "given." Far from being neutral, this presupposition of the creation's autonomy is an intellectual act of theft. It is an application of the serpent's rhetorical question: "Hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). That question led immediately to the transgression of a boundary: theft. So does the assumption of scarcity as the methodological starting point of economics.

2. Locke's Theory of God's Original Ownership

When a methodological individualist eventually gets around to considering the question of personal sovereignty, he begins with the presupposition of each man's ownership of his own person. This was John Locke's argument in 1690, but only after he had invoked God's sovereign ownership of creation. He wrote: "Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a 'property' in his own 'person.' This nobody has any right to but himself."[16] Libertarian economist and ethicist Murray Rothbard began with self-ownership apart from any consideration of God.[17] If followed to its logical conclusion, Rothbard's presupposition legalizes suicide. Christians should therefore sense the presence of a fundamental ethical problem associated with methodological individualism.

The right-wing Enlightenment's presupposition of each person's self-ownership does not solve the moral and judicial problems regarding the limits (boundaries) of that which adult children owe to their parents, whose time and effort allowed their children to survive. Methodological individualism begins with the individual as if there were no legal bonds of the family, which is a corporate institution sanctioned by God and possessing legal claims on the individual. Are these family claims morally and legally valid? Methodological individualism begins with assumption that these claims are not valid. Methodological individualists assume this; they do not prove it by an

16. John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (1690), V:26.

17. Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, [1982] 1998), pp. 45–46, 59; Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State: A Treatise on Economic Principles*, 2nd ed. (Auburn, Alabama: Mises Institute, [1962] 2009), p. 92.

appeal to economics, which is not autonomous. Economic analysis assumes, but does not prove, certain doctrines of property.

At best, the presupposition of self-ownership does not solve the problem of ownership of anything other than one's own person. But men are dependent on external nature for their survival. How is ownership lawfully established over anything in nature? The libertarians, who are methodological individualists, offer two answers. First, ownership is established by a person's verbal declaration.[18] If true, then we must ask: What happens when one person's declaration extends across a boundary that some other person lays claim to? This is the issue of *lawful boundaries*, which is point three of the biblical covenant.[19] Who possesses lawful authority to decide which declaration is superior? (Point two.) By what standard? (Point three.) By which sanctions? (Point four.)

The second answer insists that ownership is established, as John Locke argued in 1690, by mixing one's labor with the soil. Locke wrote:

> Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a "property" in his own "person." This nobody has any right to but himself. The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men. For this "labour" being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others.[20]

This also does not answer the question of boundaries. How wide a range does the original owner lawfully roam as he picks the fruits of nature, removing them from the unclaimed state of nature? Locke said that a man in a state of nature has a legal claim only to that which he removes from the environment for his consumption. But then a man walks away in search of other fruits of nature. On what legal basis can he establish lawful permanent ownership of the land that he leaves behind? That which he is unwilling to defend by his continuing presence cannot be said to belong to him—not on the basis of

18. This was the position of libertarian anarchist Robert LeFevre.

19. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 3.

20. Locke, *Second Treatise*, V:26. Rothbard took this position. Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State*, p. 92.

anything in Locke's theory, anyway. Covenantally speaking, God retains and defends His primary ownership by His omnipresence. Man does not possesses this attribute. When he leaves the scene, his claim of ownership departs with him, or so Locke's analysis implies.

Locke's theory is mostly hyperbole. We must ask: What kind of labor is mixed with the soil? Extractive labor only? This is what Locke said.[21] Then what of planting and guarding, as in the garden of Eden? In short, what about fences? What are the lawful limits of man's original fences? Locke's answer: "As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labour fix a property in. Whatever is beyond this is more than his share, and belongs to others. Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy."[22] The moment the economic theorist raises the divisive judicial issue, "more than his share," he has raised the issue of boundaries. How can today's land user know how much land he will use tomorrow or next week? What new information will he discover? Can he pick one berry in the far country, and by this act of extraction, lawfully establish title to everything in between? Can he plant one acorn in a far country and thereby lay claim to everything in between? The soil in Locke's theory is symbolic soil, not literal soil. There are no identifiable boundaries in Locke's theory, yet *the establishment of boundaries is the central issue of the definition of lawful title to property*, from the garden of Eden until final judgment.

Locke's theory of individual ownership assumes the prior existence of some sort of overarching moral and legal order. Locke admitted this in the opening words of his chapter on property.

> Whether we consider natural reason, which tells us that men, being once born, have a right to their preservation, and consequently to meat and drink and such other things as Nature affords for their subsistence, or "revelation," which gives us an account of those grants God made of the world to Adam, and to Noah and his sons, it is very clear that God, as King David says (Psalm 115. 16), "has given the earth to the children of men," given it to mankind in common.[23]

Immediately, he hit a conceptual brick wall. How can we logically get from God's delegation of ownership to one man, Adam or Noah, to the concept of individual ownership by many men? Locke had no answer, as he admitted, so he offered speculation regarding "how

21. Locke, *Second Treatise*, V:27.
22. *Ibid.*, V:30.
23. *Ibid.*, V:24.

men might come to have a property in several parts of that which God gave to mankind in common." "Might" is surely a highly speculative word, and a weak foundation on which to build an entire social, political, and economic worldview. Locke wrote a long, convoluted sentence.

> But, this being supposed, it seems to some a very great difficulty how any one should ever come to have a property in anything, I will not content myself to answer, that, if it be difficult to make out "property" upon a supposition that God gave the world to Adam and his posterity in common, it is impossible that any man but one universal monarch should have any "property" upon a supposition that God gave the world to Adam and his heirs in succession, exclusive of all the rest of his posterity; but I shall endeavour to show how men might come to have a property in several parts of that which God gave to mankind in common, and that without any express compact of all the commoners.

Locke began with God as the sovereign original owner, who then delegated ownership to the sole representative agent of mankind, Adam. This expressly biblical starting point was the context of Locke's theory of self-ownership and his theory of ownership through a man's labor mixed with soil. None of this provides epistemological support for a libertarian theorist. The methodological individualist begins with the autonomous individual. He cannot legitimately invoke God, Adam, or covenant theology, nor would he want to. Yet Rothbard invoked Locke when he theorized regarding the ethical starting point for pri-vate property. He presented Locke's soil and labor argument as if it has solved the issue of boundaries. He devoted only a few paragraphs to this most crucial of all economic questions: original ownership.

3. Collective Sanctions and Society

In contrast to Locke's methodological individualism, the methodological collectivist assumes that society's claims of ownership are prior to and superior to the individual's claims. But this raises a series of questions that humanists have been unable to answer to each other's satisfaction. What is society? What are its boundaries (point three)? The local community? The nation-state? The whole world—the so-called family of man? Who represents this society (point two)? Are we speaking of the state, i.e., civil government, when we say the word "society"? Which state? Exactly what is it that establishes the prior or superior jurisdiction of this or that agency called the state?

What if there are competing jurisdictions of various states? Whose jurisdiction is superior? By what standard? Who lawfully imposes the sanctions? From what or from whom are sanctions lawfully derived by those who claim to represent society? Wars are fought between nations and within nations regarding the issue of the authority to establish boundaries and then impose sanctions against boundary violators in the name of society.

The methodological collectivist asserts a prior sovereignty or a superior sovereignty over the individual. But this also does not answer the question of the delegated authority to guard the garden. A representative guardian is required, but in whose name? By whose standard? Hitler wanted national socialism, but he kept expanding the Reich's boundaries. Stalin wanted international socialism, but productivity inside the national boundaries of the Soviet Union's satellite nations always seemed to benefit the Soviet Union's hierarchy. It took the Second World War (1939–45) to establish new national boundaries in Europe, and then the Cold War (1946–91) began: a dispute over boundaries. To say that society is sovereign raises the question: Which society? Represented by whom? By what standard? By which sanctions? With what goals? These are crucial questions, yet there has been no agreement on them or their answers throughout the history of social theory.

These methodological issues extend into the field of economic theory. There is a long tradition of methodological collectivism in economics: from Greek speculation to medieval guild socialism to modern socialism, Marxism, and modern ecology-based economics.

There are very few examples of exclusively individualistic or exclusively collectivist theoretical economic systems. There have been none in practice. Men cling intellectually to one or another version of the mixed economy. Keynesianism has been the dominant version of a theory of the mixed economy since the late 1930s.

In opposition to both methodological individualism and methodological collectivism, I offer methodological covenantalism.[24]

Conclusion

Deuteronomy is the Pentateuch's book of inheritance and disinheritance. Its theme is three-fold: predestination, adopted sonship, and inheritance. The fourth generation after the descent into Egypt

24. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 5.

would surely inherit Canaan (Gen. 15:16).[25] This had been predestined by God. This inheritance was nonetheless ethically conditional: primarily dependent on Jesus Christ's representative perfect work and secondarily dependent on Joshua's decision to circumcise the nation at Gilgal (Josh. 5:3). To maintain this inheritance—the kingdom grant—Israel would have to obey God's law. Disobedience would produce disinheritance, which Jesus announced to the religious leaders of Israel: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The adopted Israelite heirs were finally replaced in A.D. 70 by gentile adopted heirs. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

Deuteronomy offers the basics of biblical economics. The economics that Deuteronomy teaches is free market economics. This is why Christian economists of the socialist or Keynesian persuasion do not spend a lot of time commenting on the specific details of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is an affront to their economics. They therefore reject Deuteronomy, *a priori*. The problem is, they refuse to offer an exegetical basis for their rejection. They assume what they need to prove. They regard the Old Testament as "God's word, emeritus." They offer no hermeneutical defense of this position. They merely assume it. Then they wander off into the epistemological wilderness of academic humanism in search of formulas by which the state, through compulsion, deficits, and fiat money, can turn stones into bread.[26]

25. Kohath, Amram, Moses, Gershom.
26. Appendix A.

INTRODUCTION

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

DEUTERONOMY 1:1

The Hebrew words that begin this book of the Bible, *'eleh dabarim* or *devarim*, mean simply "these words." But this phrase is not the familiar name of the book that has come down through time to Jews and gentiles. Deuteronomy is the book's commonly accepted title. The word "deuteronomy" is an Anglicized derivative from the Greek: second (*deutero*) law (*nomos*). It comes from the Septuagint's[1] rendering into Greek of the words *mishneh torah*,[2] or **copy of the law**. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites" (Deut. 17:18).[3] It is worth noting that this verse occurs in a passage in which any future king in Israel is told to read the Mosaic law and obey it.

What were the words of Moses? They were a recapitulation of God's law. This is why the laws of Deuteronomy repeat so many of the laws of Leviticus, e.g., Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. This recapitulation of the law was preparatory to the national covenant renewal at Gilgal (Josh. 5). The generation that had been born in the wilderness had not visibly covenanted with God: no circumcision. Most—probably all—of the members of the exodus generation except Moses were dead by now.[4] Aaron died (Num. 20:28) just prior to the wars against King Arad, King Og, and King Sihon (Num. 21). It was now time for national covenant renewal (point four of the biblical covenant), which had to precede national covenantal inheritance

4. Exceptions: Joshua and Caleb.

(point five). Deuteronomy presents both the judicial basis and the promise of this inheritance.

According to the King James Version, this presentation of the law was made "on this side of Jordan in the wilderness." This is an inaccurate translation. The Hebrew word translated as "this side" should be translated "opposite side," i.e., east of the Jordan, meaning across the Jordan. The King James translators sometimes translated *ayber* as "other side."[5]

Moses died on the wilderness side of the Jordan. Yet the context of this passage indicates that the word should be translated "other side." Because Moses wrote these words, he must have been writing from the perspective of the nation after it had crossed the Jordan. He was on the other side of Jordan when he wrote of the other side as the other side. That is, he wrote Deuteronomy *as if he were writing to people settled in Canaan*. He was writing in the prophetic confidence that Israel would be successful in the conquest of the land. He was writing to those who had already inherited. The future-orientation of the Book of Deuteronomy begins in its first sentence.

A. Sanctions and Inheritance/Disinheritance

Deuteronomy begins after the promised negative sanction against the generation of the exodus had been imposed by God: they would not enter the Promised Land (Num. 14:23). This exclusion was a secondary form of disinheritance. The primary form was genocide. This is what God had initially threatened. "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Num. 14:12). Moses had countered this threat by means of the ultimate prayer: an appeal to God's reputation.

> And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in

5. "And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is **beyond** Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days" (Gen. 50:10). "From thence they removed, and pitched on the **other** side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites" (Num. 21:13). Yet in one case the word is translated both ways in one verse: "For we will not inherit with them on **yonder** side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on **this** side Jordan eastward" (Num. 32:19).

> a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness (Num. 14:13–16).

Inheritance can be secured in one of two ways: disinheritance or adoption. Either God displaces the present owners and transfers ownership to His people, or else He incorporates the present owners into His people through adoption, which then secures the inheritance. *There is no third way*. Inheritance and disinheritance are two sides of the same coin, or the two sides of the same covenant. They are an aspect of God's sanctions, positive and negative, in eternity but also in history. *This means that inheritance and disinheritance are both ultimately eschatological*. The historical conflict of kingdom's, God's vs. Satan's, is ultimately a battle over inheritance and disinheritance.

Sihon's resistance to Israel was part of this preliminary process of inheritance/disinheritance.

> But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain: Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took (Deut. 2:30–35).

This had been a manifestation of a system of national dispossession. The gods and the laws of Canaan were to be dispossessed by force.

> And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever (Deut. 4:37–40).

This dispossession was supposed to be comprehensive: "But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee" (Deut. 20:16–17).

The Book of Deuteronomy is the Pentateuch's book of inheritance. It follows the Pentateuch's book of sanctions, Numbers.[6] The account of the preliminary dispossession on the wilderness side of the Jordan is found in Numbers 21. The significance of this initial warfare was announced by Moses to the generation of the conquest. Moses framed his discussion of the events of Numbers 21 in terms of God's program of inheritance/disinheritance.

B. The Fourth Generation

The key verse governing the inheritance of the land of Canaan by Israel is Genesis 15:16: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."[7] The four generations that dwelt in Egypt were the heirs of Levi: Kohath, Amram, Moses, Gershom.[8] It was under Joshua's leadership that his generation and their children invaded Canaan. Joshua was the representative leader.

A theological question arises: Was God's promise to Abraham conditional or unconditional? Was it dependent on what Abraham and his heirs would do (conditional), or was it a prophecy that could not be thwarted by anything that man would do (unconditional)? For that matter, is it legitimate even to distinguish between the two?

The traditional theological answer to this question is that the Abrahamic promise was unconditional. This answer invokes Paul's arguments in Galatians 3. "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed

6. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012).

7. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

8. Gershom was born outside of Egypt, but he was part of the fourth generation.

should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:17–19). Paul here was speaking of the Mosaic law, but theologians have extended his line of argumentation to the context of the Abrahamic promise regarding Canaan.

To argue that a promise is unconditional is to argue for God's predestination. The theologian announces: "God's promise to Abraham was a prophecy." Yet this statement begs the question. Is biblical prophecy at least sometimes conditional? For example, Jonah prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days, yet Nineveh escaped this curse through repentance. Was God's promise to Abraham that sort of prophecy, i.e., conditional on the ethical response of those who heard it? Specifically, could the third generation have inherited Canaan, had the word of God been mixed with faith? "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

C. The Doctrine of Predestination

God's absolute predestination is central to the doctrine of the unconditional promise. God promised Abraham that the fourth generation would inherit. This can mean only one thing: they were *predestined* to inherit. It was not merely statistically likely that they would inherit; they would surely inherit. Yet the males born in the wilderness were not circumcised. They were circumcised in a mass ritual procedure at Gilgal after they had crossed the Jordan and were inside Canaan's boundaries (Josh. 5:4). To inherit, they had to be lawful heirs. The mark of Abrahamic heirship was circumcision. "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you" (Gen. 17:11). Circumcision was the covenant sign. So, in order to fulfill the Abrahamic promise, the Israelites had to perform a mandatory work. This means that the Abrahamic promise was conditional on works, yet at the same time, it could not be thwarted, for the inheritance by the fourth generation was predestined. This is the age-old issue of promise vs. works, unconditional promise vs. conditional promise.

1. Conditional or Unconditional

Ephesians 2:8–10 solves this theological dilemma: not only are covenant-keepers predestined to eternal life, they are predestined to

temporal good works. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." A covenantal promise is therefore *ethically conditional*—the mandatory performance of good works—yet it is also *operationally unconditional*, for these good works are part of the predestined inheritance itself. Protestant fundamentalists quote Ephesians 2:8–9: grace. Roman Catholics are more likely to quote Ephesians 2:10: works. Theonomists quote the entire passage, which includes the phrase, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," i.e., predestination.

The Epistle to the Hebrews ties the doctrine of predestined good works to the ethically conditional nature of the Abrahamic promise. Hebrews 3 and 4 discuss the sabbatical rest which God gives to His people. The Israelites of Moses' generation did not enter into the rest—Canaan—which God had offered to them. The author cited Psalm 95: "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest" (Ps. 95:8–11; cf. Heb. 3:8–11). This means that God made a legitimate offer to the third generation: immediate inheritance. Moses made this plain in his recapitulation of the events immediately following the exodus.

> And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do. And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. . . . Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God: And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. Then I said unto you, Dread not,

> neither be afraid of them. The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD (Deut. 1:18–21; 26–36).

How can we solve this seeming theological anomaly? God's promise was given to the fourth generation, yet He commanded the third generation to begin the invasion of Canaan, promising to go before them, leading them to victory, just as He had done in Egypt and the Red Sea. This indicates that *the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise by the fourth generation was historically conditional*, i.e., dependent on the faithlessness of the third generation, which would refuse to conquer.

The beginning of the solution to this theological dilemma is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3). These words are quite clear: "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." This language—"before the foundation of the world"—is also found in the biblical passage which, more than any other, teaches the doctrine of predestination, the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. . . . In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

> Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:3–6, 11–14).

2. The Three-Fold Theme of Grace

Predestination, adoption, and inheritance: here is the three-fold theme of God's special grace to His people in history. This is not a two-fold theme—adoption and inheritance—contrary to Arminians and other defenders of the doctrine of man's free will. Adoption in Christ is the only judicially valid basis of any man's claim to his share of the inheritance of God's kingdom, both in history and eternity. Paul teaches that every redeemed person's adoption by God in history has been predestined before the foundation of the world.

The three-fold theme of *predestination, adoption (judicial sonship), and inheritance* is the theme of the Book of Deuteronomy. God, in His absolute sovereignty, predestined the fourth generation after the descent into Egypt to inherit the Promised Land. Moses spoke the words recorded in Deuteronomy to the representatives of the fourth generation, just prior to Israel's inheritance of the land under Joshua. Similarly, God has predestined individual Christians to eternal salvation, which is their lawful inheritance through judicial adoption into God's redeemed family. Paul's words are clear: we have obtained in history a down payment or "earnest" of this eternal inheritance. "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (v. 13b). The Greek word translated here as "purchased possession" is elsewhere translated as "saving," as in "the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39).

The Greek word that Paul used for "inheritance" (Gal. 3:18) is the same one that Stephen used to identify God's promise of Canaan to Abraham: "And he gave him none **inheritance** in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child" (Acts 7:5). Paul used this language of the *seed*, which alone lawfully *inherits*, in order to identify those who are *adopted* by God the Father through Christ's sacrificial work of redemption: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Paul insisted in his letter to the Ephesians that this eternal and historical inheritance of the kingdom of God is an inheritance of righteousness only for those who are themselves righteous. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man,

who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5). *This kingdom inheritance comes exclusively through God's grace*. Nevertheless, Paul insisted on another equally important doctrine: *the earthly good works that are mandatory in the life of the true heir are as predestined as the adoption itself*.

D. Imputation

Imputation is associated with point four of the biblical covenant: sanctions. He who imposes sanctions necessarily extends judgment. He evaluates. God is the sovereign imputer of judgment. He is the sanctions-bringer.

The basis of the theological reconciliation of grace vs. good works, or unconditional election vs. conditional inheritance, is the doctrine of imputation. Participation in both of the two kingdoms in history, Satan's and Christ's, is representational as well as individual. The sin of Adam is imputed to covenant-breaking man. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:12–14). There was a law that condemned all men to death: God's command to Adam not to eat of the forbidden tree. Adam's heirs did not commit this sin individually, but they all committed it representatively through their father, Adam. So, death reigned from Adam to Moses. The fact that Adam's heirs did not (and could not—no tree) commit Adam's specific sin made no difference in the question of life and death. They all committed it. Adam's representative act condemned all of his heirs. The proof of this, Paul argued, is that they all died. The law was still in force—not the Mosaic law, but the Edenic law. The sanction of death still ruled.

This judicial imputation of Adam's sin is the historical starting point of biblical covenant theology. To escape God's declaration of "Guilty!" to Adam, and thereby to Adam's heirs, a person must come under God's declaration of "Not guilty!" to Jesus Christ and His heirs. Adam's sin is the judicial basis of the imputation of disinherited sonship to Adam's heirs. Jesus Christ's perfect humanity (though not His divinity) is the judicial basis of the imputation of adopted sonship to Christ's heirs. "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free

gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:16–17).

Let us consider this theological doctrine from another angle: the imputation of Christ's good works. As surely as Christ met the comprehensive demands of God's law, so also do all those people to whom His perfection is imputed by God. *Christ's imputed perfection is* ***definitive***. At the moment of their regeneration, people receive Christ's perfection judicially through grace. Then they are required to strive in this life to meet Jesus' standard of moral perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). This condition of perfection is achieved by covenant-keepers only in the world beyond history. But the goal of perfection is still our mandatory standard, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Both conditions are true of covenant-keeping men in history: perfection and imperfection. First, imperfection: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:8–10). This condition relates to progressive sanctification in history. Second, perfection: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (I John 3:7–9). In the day of final judgment, God looks at Christ's perfection in history, not Christians' sins in history. The redeemed person's moral condition, definitively and finally, is representatively perfect: sin-free. This is because of the representative imputation of Christ's perfection. But the redeemed person's life in history is a progressive overcoming of sin, which is always present.

The doctrine of imputation is the theological basis of reconciling God's conditional and unconditional promises. An unconditional promise rests on the predestinating work of God in history to bring the recipients of the promise to that degree of moral perfection and judicial righteous-

ness required to obtain the promise. *No promise by God is devoid of stipulations*. The covenantal question is this: Who lawfully performs these stipulations on behalf of the heirs? Paul provided the answer in Galatians 3. His message in Galatians 3 is that the promise is more fundamental than the law. Yet the promise was not in opposition to the law, nor was the law absent from the conditional terms of the promise.

> And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law (Gal. 3:17–21).

Did the Israelites have to be circumcised in order to inherit the land? Yes. To become an heir of God's promise to Abraham's seed, you had to be circumcised. Yet the promise to Abraham was nonetheless unconditional. How could it be both? *Because of Christ's work as the judicial representative of all redeemed men*. God's promise to Abraham—and through him, to his heirs—was always conditional on Jesus Christ's fulfilling of God's law in history. This is why Paul invoked an otherwise peculiar grammatical argument: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). *God's promise to Abraham was unconditional for the fourth generation only because this promise was conditional on the historical work of Jesus Christ as redeemed mankind's judicial representative*. Had Jesus' perfectly obedient life not been predestined by God before the foundation of the world, there would have been no judicial basis of redemption, and therefore no unconditional promises in history. The only promise that would have been fulfilled in history would have been God's promise to Adam: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

Death was a major sanction. So was the curse of the ground. Sanctions are fourth on the list of the Bible's five-point covenant. These are: transcendence/presence, hierarchy/representation, ethics/boundaries, oath/sanctions, and succession/inheritance. As applied

to economic theory, these five points are: primary ownership, delegated ownership, property rights, scarcity, and inheritance. Scarcity in the modern economic definition—"at zero price, there is greater demand than supply"—is the result of God's curse of the earth in response to Adam's rebellion (Gen. 3:17–19).[9]

If this is the case, then Christians should conclude that a reduction of scarcity, i.e., economic growth, is the result of God's positive sanctions in history. On what legal basis does man receive these positive sanctions? For the answer, the Christian must look to the work of Christ: His legal status as God's covenantally representative agent and also His work of redemption through God's imposition of negative sanctions at Calvary. The negative sanctions of Calvary were soon overcome in history by Christ's bodily resurrection and His bodily ascension. These two divine positive sanctions in history have enabled man's overcoming of the curse of the earth through economic growth. *The negative sanctions that were imposed by God on Adam have been* ***definitively*** *overcome through the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. These Adamic sanctions must now be* ***progressively*** *overcome in history through dominion by Christ's covenantal agents*. The dominion covenant is still binding on mankind. We are to obey God's law. God will bless the society that does this. This is the message of Deuteronomy 28:1–14. The society that disobeys will suffer losses. This is the message of Deuteronomy 28:15–68. The question of economic growth raises the issue of law.

E. The Hatred of God's Law

By linking covenant-keeping with God's blessings in history, and covenant-breaking with God's curses in history, the theonomist challenges just about everybody. Not only does he challenge all other religions, including humanism, he also challenges premillennialists and amillennialists. There can be no escape from this confrontation. The doctrine of eschatology (point five) raises the issue of historical sanctions (point four). These, in turn, raise the issue of biblical law (point three). The consistent theonomist insists that biblical law, God's predictable historical sanctions, and eschatology are "a package deal," to use modern American slang. They are unbreakably interlocked. Defenders of non-theonomic views of eschatology are not always consistent in their rejection of this package. A few of them may

9. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 11.

not openly reject theonomy's insistence on the covenantal continuity of biblical law and God's visible, predictable, corporate historical sanctions, although most of them do. Their rejection of postmillennialism eventually leads most of them to reject theonomy's view of law and sanctions.

Modern Christians are generally opposed to biblical law. This is one reason why they are opposed to postmillennialism. Instead of rejecting biblical law on the basis of their anti-postmillennialism, many of them are anti-postmillennial because of their rejection of the continuing authority of biblical law and its mandated civil sanctions. For these critics, the Book of Deuteronomy is an offense. When pushed to state their views, they come out against Deuteronomy. The size of this commentary indicates why they are so hostile to Deuteronomy: Deuteronomy contains the most comprehensive presentation of God's law.

Is there evidence that God's commandments in Deuteronomy were annulled by the New Covenant? Some commandments have been annulled, such as the law of genocidal annihilation. That was a one-time event. It is the job of the expositor to examine which Mosaic laws have carried over into the New Covenant and which have not. But for a critic of the free market order, or any other aspect or social product of Deuteronomy, blithely to dismiss Deuteronomy's authority over him and his academic speculations without showing what has been annulled and why, is to play with fire.

Modern man arrogates to himself the right to pick and choose from God's revelation, a practice which Rushdoony called the smorgasbord approach to the Bible. Modern academic evangelicals come in the name of the latest humanist fad, indulging in the rhetoric of contempt for God's law. Joseph Sobran, a Roman Catholic columnist with a gift for the English language, once wrote that he would rather belong to a church that is 5,000 years behind the times than one that is huffing and puffing to keep with the spirit of the age. Put another way, better Eastern Orthodoxy than the World Council of Churches. Better the Athanasian Creed than the Social Gospel.

God's law provides the legal framework for a free market social order; it undermines the theory of socialism. Until at least one critic of the free market produces a comparably detailed commentary on the economics of the Pentateuch, readers of my multi-volume series should withhold judgment regarding the standard replies by Christian defenders of socialism and the mixed economy: (1) the Bible does

not offer a blueprint for economics; and/or (2) the Bible is opposed to the free market. Assertions without proof are merely rhetoric. To my critics, I will say it one more time: *You can't beat something with nothing*.

Conclusion

Deuteronomy recapitulated God's law in preparation for Israel's national covenant renewal through circumcision (Josh. 5). Moses looked forward to Israel's conquest of Canaan. The law would provide the judicial basis for Israel's maintaining the kingdom grant.

The Pentateuch is structured in terms of the five points of the covenant. This fact testifies against higher critics who would deny the Mosaic authorship. The Pentateuch's structure compares with the treaties of kings of the second millennium B.C. It was written in that era.

The fifth point of the covenant is inheritance/disinheritance. This is the primary theme of Deuteronomy. The book is inherently postmillennial. Dispensationalism denies this, of course. But, by acknowledging that Jews after A.D. 70 have been under the covenant's negative sanctions,[10] the editors of the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (1967) thereby acknowledged covenantal continuity, Old Testament to New Testament. Nevertheless, by ignoring the continuity of the covenant with respect to the church as the lawful heir of the Old Covenant's promises, they placed Christians under the rule of covenant-breakers. If both positions are true—continuity (negative) for Jews and discontinuity for the church—then neither the Jews nor the Christians are the recipients of corporate covenant blessings this side of the millennium. The cultural pessimism of dispensationalism is inescapable. It offers no cultural hope for the Church Age; so, it places no value on the development of biblical social theory.

In contrast, theonomic postmillennialism offers both hope for the church and incentives for those Christians who would develop an explicitly biblical social theory. Deuteronomy, more than any other book in the Bible, offers the judicial content of such a reconstruction.

The two most common Christian eschatologies, premillennialism (fundamentalist churches) and amillennialism (European liturgical churches), have correctly relegated the conquest of Canaan to the Old Covenant. They have also relegated inheritance in history to

10. *New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 251, note 2, Deut. 30:5.

the Old Covenant. But these are separate issues. After the exile, the laws of landed inheritance changed. The gentiles occupying the land were to be incorporated into the jubilee's inheritance system (Ezek. 47:21–23).[11] This pointed to the New Covenant's incorporation of the gentiles into the covenant. *It was not the conquest of Canaan that was fundamental to Israel; it was the preservation of the messianic seed line that was fundamental*. The crucial eschatological issue was the Promised Seed, not the Promised Land.

This does not mean that the issue of inheritance in history was an exclusively Old Covenant issue. On the contrary, the issue of inheritance is far more a New Covenant issue. The Old Covenant inheritance centered around the Promised Seed (Gen. 3:15). Only much later did the issue of the Promised Land become intermixed with the Promised Seed (Abraham's covenant). This was a temporary mixing of categories of inheritance that ended with the coming of the Messiah, i.e., Shiloh (Gen. 49:10), and His rejection by Israel.

The universalism of the Genesis inheritance (Gen. 3:15) has now been mixed with the universalism of the kingdom of God in history (Matt. 21:43). This is the meaning of the Great Commission: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18–20).[12] So, far from being relegated to the Old Covenant, *inheritance has become the fundamental eschatological issue of the New Covenant*.

11. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 22.

12. See Appendix I.

Part 1

TRANSCENDENCE/PRESENCE (Deut. 1:1–5)

1

THE GOD WHO BRINGS JUDGMENT IN HISTORY

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab. (There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea.) And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD *had given him in commandment unto them; After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei: On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law . . .*

DEUTERONOMY 1:1–5

The theocentric focus of this passage is the sovereignty of God. He is present with His people. He brought judgment against the Amorites. He would now declare His law once again, as He had four decades earlier. He would declare Himself through Moses, just as He had four decades earlier.

By the time of the opening words of the Book of Deuteronomy, all of the fighting men of the generation of the exodus were dead, except for Joshua and Caleb. In his recapitulation of the story of the wilderness, Moses said: "So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people . . ." (Deut. 2:16). Then Moses re-told the story of the defeat of Sihon (Deut. 2:26–35). This event had taken place before Deuteronomy's narrative began (Num. 21:21–26).

The exodus generation was the third after Israel's descent into Egypt: Kohath, Amram, Moses. The conquest of Canaan was therefore imminent, according to God's prophecy to Abraham. "But in

the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).[1] The death of the exodus generation had prepared the nation of Israel for the long-promised inheritance. Deuteronomy is the Pentateuch's book of inheritance. Inheritance is associated with succession, which is point five of the biblical covenant model.[2]

Meredith Kline identified this introductory passage in Deuteronomy as the preamble of the covenant or treaty between God and Israel. "Ancient suzerainty treaties began with a preamble in which the speaker, the one who was declaring his lordship and demanding the vassal's allegiance, identified himself." Deuteronomy's opening words, "these are the words," were common in extra-biblical treaties.[3] Who, then, was the sovereign? Was it Moses himself, as James Jordan argued?[4] Or was it God?

It was God. Moses was the mediator.

A. Moses the Mediator

The opening words reveal that Moses spoke them. The question is this: In what capacity? It had to be as a *delegated agent*. "Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them; After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites…" (vv. 3b–4a).

Who had achieved the victory over Sihon? Not Moses. God had given them victory—the same God who had sustained them in the wilderness for four decades. The implication was that God is sovereign over all earthly kings, even as Moses was sovereign over Israel's civil rulers (Deut. 1:13–18). God was also present with the Israelites, delivering their enemies into their hands—as present as Moses had been in rendering civil judgment (Ex. 18). That is, God is *above* mankind, yet He is *specially present* with His chosen people.

This makes God different from both the god of deism and the god of pantheism. The god of deism is too distant from his creation to influence it. *His lack of immanence destroys his sovereignty*. His personalism

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

2. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), ch. 5.

3. Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 50.

4. James B. Jordan, *Covenant Sequence in Leviticus and Deuteronomy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), p. 58.

is limited; it applies only to his own being. The world is impersonal. English Deists may never have argued this way, since they were heavily influenced by Christianity, but this is the theoretical meaning of deism. The god that made the cosmic clock no longer interferes with it. At most, he tinkers at the edges of creation. In contrast, the god of pantheism is a part of the creation and is therefore unable to influence it as a sovereign master. He is immersed in it. He cannot remove himself from it in order to command it. *His lack of transcendence destroys his sovereignty*. His personalism is limited; he shares it with the world he did not make.

The God of the Bible is *sovereign over* the world because He made it out of nothing. He is *present with* the world because He providentially sustains it. The God of origins is the God of history. The Bible teaches cosmic personalism.[5] The world is personal because God is personal. It does not share in God's being, but it reflects His being. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). In contrast to the Bible's concept of cosmic personalism, most modern philosophies teach cosmic impersonalism. God has been shaved out of the cosmos by Occam's razor.

This passage resembles part two of the biblical covenant, which Kline called historical prologue.[6] Yet Kline listed it as part one: "Preamble: Covenant Mediator."[7] A mediator implies a hierarchy; hierarchy is also point two of the biblical covenant.[8] Why, then, did both Kline and Sutton designate this brief section as part one? Why do I? If this designation is merely for the sake of argument, to make the Book of Deuteronomy fit the five-point covenant, then the power of their argument is weakened.

This is ultimately a question regarding the Person who is represented by the mediator. God revealed Himself to Old Covenant people through prophets. Moses was the greatest of these prophets (Deut. 34:10).[9] The words of Moses His servant could be trusted. These words had to be obeyed because God is above men, and He brings judgments in history in terms of His Bible-revealed law. The *law-giver* is God, who is also the *sanctions-bringer*. He is transcendent over the world as the law-giver, yet He is present with the world as the

5. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 1.
6. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, p. 52.
7. *Ibid*., p. 50.
8. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 2.
9. John the Baptist was his equal (Matt. 11:11).

sanctions-bringer. Sihon and Og learned the hard way that God is totally sovereign. To present Himself to the generation of the conquest, God announced through Moses His law and sanctions.

The announcement of God's law and God's historical sanctions points back to the giving of the law after the exodus. The Book of Exodus is the second book of the Pentateuch. It corresponds to the second point of the covenant, as Kline and Sutton argued. Moses reviews in Deuteronomy the story of God's dealings with Israel for 40 years in the wilderness (1:6–4:49). God is the God of history because He is ruler over history: hierarchy. He brings His word to pass.

In the Book of Genesis, God revealed Himself as the Creator. In Genesis, Moses presented an account in the first chapter in terms of what God repeatedly said: "Let there be," and the immediate results of His words in history. When God presented Himself in the Old Covenant, He did so, not by announcing a theological proposition, but by declaring what He has done in history. He identified Himself through written words: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Then He gave a detailed account of His acts. Similarly, we read in the opening passage in Deuteronomy, "Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them" (v. 3b). Who is the Lord? He is the Person who only recently had destroyed Sihon and Og (v. 4), the Person whose law Moses was about to review.

B. Four Decades

The Book of Deuteronomy begins six months after Aaron died (Deut. 1:3). Aaron died at age 123 (Num. 33:39) in the fortieth year after the exodus: "And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month" (Num. 33:38). Deuteronomy's phrase, "the first day of the fifth month," also refers to Aaron's death. Miriam had died before Aaron, in the first month (Num. 20:1). Aaron's death marked the end of the wilderness period.

Deuteronomy ("second law") announces the terms of the covenant. It is the second reading of the law. Why a second reading? Because *this was preparatory to an act of national covenant renewal*. The fourth generation after the nation's initial subordination to Egypt (Gen. 15:16) was about to experience corporate covenant renewal. This took place inside the Promised Land at Gilgal: mass circumci-

sion (Josh. 5:5). Before they were told by Joshua to participate in this act of covenant renewal, the generation of the conquest was required to hear the law read in public.

It was not just that they had to hear the law. They also had to be reminded of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (Deut. 4:20, 34, 37), as well as God's miraculous preservation of Israel in the wilderness (Deut. 8:3–4). The *law of God* and the *nation's deliverance by God* were linked: "These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt" (Deut. 4:45). Because the deliverance and preservation of Israel in the wilderness were clearly miraculous events, the God who performed these miracles is above history: transcendent. But because He spoke through Moses, God was also present with His people. His transcendence in no way undermines His immanence—immanence in the sense of presence. He is not part of the creation, but He is present with His people.[10]

Conclusion

The opening passage in Deuteronomy identifies Moses as the spokesman for the God who had delivered Israel out of Egypt and had also defeated two great Canaanite kings, Sihon and Og. Then begins a presentation of this sovereign King's law. But before this law was announced by God's prophet, the Israelites had to be reminded of the power of God in history. God's law is not some sort of natural law order that is part of the cosmos and therefore indistinguishable from the cosmos. God's law is not a system of impersonal law. It is the law of the God who is sovereign over history. The evidence of His sovereignty was His deliverance of Israel.

To persuade the Israelites that He could deliver the long-expected inheritance into their hands, God spoke through Moses. Moses spoke of God's demonstrated power over two Canaanitic kings. Moses spoke also of God's law. As sovereign over history, God is the sanctions-bringer in history. He delivers His promised inheritance in history. He announced His law through Moses after He had slain Sihon and Og. First had come the display of His power; then came the revelation of His law. He possesses the authority to impose His law because He is sovereign over history.

10. Jesus Christ was God incarnate in history. This is the ultimate manifestation of both presence and immanence. God was in the world but not of it. In His capacity as perfect man, He was of the world. In His capacity as God, He was not.

Part 2

HIERARCHY/REPRESENTATION
(Deut. 1:6–4:49)

2

A DELAYED INHERITANCE

> *The* Lord *our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the* Lord *sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 1:6–8

The theocentric focus of this command is stewardship-ownership. Stewardship is the representative control over an asset on someone else's behalf. It implies hierarchical authority: owner > steward > asset.

A. Israel's Refusal to Fight

This transfer of ownership of the Promised Land was legally grounded in God's oath to Abraham, which He had renewed with Isaac and Jacob. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).[1] The exodus generation was the third generation. Its members had feared a confrontation with the Canaanites (Num. 14). This led to their wilderness wanderings.

Moses began Deuteronomy with a summary of the rebellion of the exodus generation in refusing to listen to Joshua and Caleb (1:22–38).

It was at that time that God had reaffirmed the promise that the

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

fourth generation would inherit. "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it" (v. 39). With this as the historical background, Moses began the second reading of God's law (v. 5). This reading of the law was a covenantal act (point three) preparatory to the covenant renewal ritual of national circumcision (Josh. 5:5) (point four). Circumcision was the mandatory rite preparatory to the conquest: inheritance (point five).

For a younger generation that knew these stories, Moses' words suggested what lay ahead: warfare. Joshua would be leading the nation into battle, his reward from God because of his courageous recommendation to invade Canaan a generation earlier. Their parents had been told by God at the time of that earlier battle with Amalek that it was time to conquer Canaan. Their parents had not accepted this assignment. Three miracles—the manna (Ex. 16), water out of a rock (Ex. 17:1–7), and military victory through Moses' raised hands (Ex. 17:8–13)—had not persuaded them that Moses' leadership could be relied on, that he had a unique position as God's spokesman. They did not believe Moses because they did not believe God.

Moses then reminded the conquest generation of God's repetition of the command to conquer the land. This had taken place at another mountain, the mountain of the Amorites (Deut. 1:19). "And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged" (vv. 20–21). Moses was speaking to the generation of the conquest; the fighting men of the exodus era, were all dead (v. 16). Nevertheless, he spoke of his having spoken to "you." He reminded them of their parents' decision not to accept the words of Joshua and Caleb (vv. 22–25). He applied the parents' rebellion to their children because it had been a *covenantally representative act*. "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God: And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us" (vv. 26–27). *Their parents had refused to listen to Moses*. "Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your

eyes; And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day" (vv. 29–33).

It was at that point that God had disinherited the exodus generation: "And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers" (vv. 34–35). Had the sins of the fathers condemned the sons? Moses would later reveal this law: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). Yet the sons had wandered with their fathers for 40 years. Their inheritance had been delayed. The effects of their fathers' sin had been borne in part by the sons. *There is covenantal representation in history. There is hierarchy*. Their parents had lawfully been in authority over them. They had made a bad decision that affected their children. The children had participated in the sins of their fathers in the same way that they had participated in the sin of Adam. *Covenantal continuity* in history is based on *covenantal representation*. Sons inherit from fathers; they also participate in the sins of their fathers, which can be seen in the size and timing of the inheritance.

Moses reminded them of the two exceptions to the curse: Caleb (v. 36) and Joshua. "But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it" (v. 38). For four decades, Moses had encouraged Joshua. Now the time had arrived; Joshua's time had come. It would soon be his assignment to lead Israel in the conquest of the Promised Land. The children of the exodus generation would gain what their parents had forfeited. The day of inheritance was imminent.

Their parents had rebelled against God's announcement of the 40-year delay. They had immediately attacked the Amorites. As Moses had predicted (Num. 14:41–42), Israel lost that battle (vv. 41–44). From that point until the recent victories over Arad, Sihon, Og, and Moab-Midian, Israel was not allowed by God to fight. Israel was not entitled to the lands of Edom and Moab (Deut. 2:5, 9). Israelites had to buy whatever they wanted: "Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that

ye may drink" (v. 6). They had forfeited their inheritance; so, God refused to allow them to engage in military conquest. Israel was not entitled to any nation's land, other than that owned by the Canaanites.

B. The Conquest of Canaan

The conquest of Canaan was a unique event. The land had been assigned to Israel in Abraham's day. But there was a time limit on the fulfillment of this promise: four generations (Gen. 15:16).

This raises a theological problem. God punished the exodus generation for their refusal to follow the advice given by Joshua and Caleb: begin the conquest. Yet He had prophesied to Abraham that the fourth generation would conquer. Why did God punish the exodus generation for not doing what He had told Abraham would not be done?

The third generation was called upon by God to conquer the Canaanites immediately after the exodus. "And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged" (Deut. 1:20–21). Yet the fourth generation was the promised heir (Gen. 15:16). How could God require the third generation to conquer Canaan?

This military conquest could have been achieved by the third generation's transfer of title to the inheritance to the fourth generation immediately following the exodus. This could have been achieved judicially by a transfer of military authority to the fourth generation, which was represented by Joshua and Caleb. These two men spoke for the fourth generation and its interests: immediate invasion. The other 10 spies spoke for the third generation. Had the third generation's representatives accepted the testimony of Joshua and Caleb, and had they been willing to transfer military leadership to Joshua and Caleb, Israel would have entered Canaan as the conqueror a generation early.

The judicial issue, and therefore the prophetic issue, was representation. Which generation's representatives would represent all of Israel in the imposition of corporate sanctions? The answer of the third generation: "Ours." This decision, publicly manifested by the congregation's attempt to stone Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14:10), sealed their doom. They would all die in the wilderness (Num. 14:33).

The exodus generation's sin in rejecting God's command had con-

demned them to a life of wandering. The Amorites, i.e., the residents of Canaan and the immediate surrounding areas—Arad, Sihon, and Og—were given extra time by God to work out the implications of their respective faiths. They were allowed to develop their rule. They had an important purpose in covenant history. They became negative examples for Israel: how not to worship and live. This leads me to a conclusion: *sin compounds over time*. It gets worse. It feeds on itself, building to a crescendo. The Amorites were filling up their cup of iniquity. In this sense, there is a kind of *progressive de-sanctification* that parallels progressive sanctification. Evil grows to the point where God will tolerate it no longer. Then He cuts it short.

The Amorites were building up an *economic inheritance* for the fourth generation of Israelites. "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full…" (Deut. 6:10–11). Nevertheless, Canaan's *spiritual inheritance* was an abomination. Israel would inherit the former but was forbidden to claim the latter. But how could this be? If Canaan's spiritual inheritance was abominable, why not also the economic results of that inheritance? If the spiritual roots were perverse, why not also the fruits? How could an evil tree produce good fruit? "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Luke 6:43).[2] This is the question of common grace.

C. Common Grace and Inheritance

Because man is made in the image of God, he cannot avoid certain common beliefs and evaluations. "Drop dead!" is a universally recognized negative phrase, just as "O, king, live forever" was a common term of respect in many ancient kingdoms, even though obviously impossible to fulfill in history.[3] Certain features of life are almost universally accepted as being desirable. Wealth is one of them, though not necessarily great wealth, which most men and societies acknowledge brings with it unpleasant consequences. Good health is another.

2. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 12.

3. I Kings 1:31; Nehemiah 2:3; Daniel 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:6, 21.

Nowhere is there anyone who would deny the truth of North's universally preferable trade-off: "It is better to be rich and healthy than it is to be poor and sick." (Of course, this must be qualified by the economist's *ceteris paribus*: other things remaining equal.)

There are common features of life that everyone acknowledges as preferable. Men share commonly agreed-upon goals: wealth in general, health in general. People seek to attain these preferred conditions of life. *This shared outlook is an aspect of common grace*. It makes economic cooperation possible among men of all religious and philosophical views.[4] This is why the efforts of Canaanites in building up their farms and vineyards produced an inheritance for Israel. Men agree on the desirability of certain results. This does not validate their logic or other culturally derived methods of coming to conclusions. It does not validate their worship of idols in seeking God's favor. But it does mean that there must be a common acceptance of certain principles of action in order for individuals to prosper.

One of these principles is thrift. Men through hard experience are taught to "save something for a rainy day." They are told: "waste not, want not." They learn that "a penny saved is a penny earned."[5] They learn not to eat their seed corn. Another principle is hard work. Men labor to subdue the earth in order that the earth might bring forth its fruits. The earth blooms because men work hard over long periods of time to convert the ground into something desirable.

D. Covenantal Limits to Growth

The life spans of men are shorter in the post-Flood world than they were before. Moses wrote: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). There are limits to the growth of capital under the authority of any individual. For the compounding process in the broadest sense to continue, he must find associates who share his vision and skills, so that he may make them heirs by leaving his capital to them.

By shortening men's life spans, God made the inheritance/disinheritance factor predominant in the building of His kingdom. If men

4. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 7.

5. Assuming a rate of zero income taxation. In high income tax brackets, a penny saved is 1.4 pennies earned.

lived as long as Methuselah (Gen. 5:27), the compounding process of evil would not have been undermined nearly so effectively as it has been by the multiplication of inter-generational transfers of wealth. There has been a much greater dispersion of the wealth of covenant-breakers because of shorter lifespans. The godly corporate inheritance compounds through the generations through the dominion work of the church. It cannot compound long term through either the family or the state. The family inheritance is too easily dissipated through bad marriages, broken covenants, or unmotivated heirs, while the state is not creative. No institution matches the church for long-term compounding: succession. *By shortening all men's lives, God has subsidized covenant-keepers' corporate advantage in society until such time as Christians are in a majority*.

1. Progressive Inheritance Through Disinheritance

The Bible's system of covenant sanctions is clear: covenant-keepers inherit; covenant-breakers do not. Covenant-breakers are eventually disinherited by covenant-keepers. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22).[6] This transfer of inheritance was by war in the case of the Canaanites. But after this, Israel was to extend its process of progressive inheritance through disinheritance by economic means. One of the means of extending their dominion was extending credit. "For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee" (Deut. 15:6).[7] Their possession of wealth would multiply at the expense of covenant-breakers.

> And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this

6. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 41.

7. Chapter 37.

> day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them (Deut. 28:11–14).[8]

Nevertheless, covenant-breakers were not to be pressured by covenant-keepers to borrow. Then how was it that their progressive disinheritance by Israel would be accomplished voluntarily? Why would they go into debt to Israel? For the same reason and in the same way that Esau was willing to sell his inheritance to Jacob (Gen. 25:30–33). Esau was more *present-oriented* than Jacob was. He valued present gratification more highly than Jacob did. Jacob was willing to give red pottage to Esau in exchange for Esau's present legal title to his future inheritance. A voluntary exchange became possible because the two men had different time perspectives. Jacob was upper class; Esau was lower class.[9]

So, there are limits to growth for the covenant-breaker. The ultimate limit is eschatological: the final judgment. God will bring to a close the conflict between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. But, prior to this eschatologically representative event, God disinherits those who hate Him. He allows covenant-breaking societies to compound their sin and their wealth for a few generations, but He allows covenant-keepers to multiply their righteousness and wealth for many generations. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5–6). This does not mean thousands of people; it means *thousands of generations*. The literalism of "thousands of generations" would mean at least 80,000 years (40 × 2 × 1000). I believe this language is symbolic; it means until the end of time.[10]

A lengthy passage later in Moses' monologue makes this time perspective clearer. First comes God's covenant promise. Next comes God's fulfillment of the promise by giving victory to His people. This

8. Chapter 69.

9. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 26:D.

10. Here is one reason why I believe this. Our memories are limited. We cannot recall more than a tiny fraction of our own lives. In studying the records of history, we can discover and then summarize only a few representative fragments. We remember far less than we read. So, if mankind survives for tens of millennia, men in the future will find it impossible to master the covenantal past, even when they live long lives (Isa. 65:17–20). The longer the race survives, the less we can understand of man's history. We become overwhelmed by its complexity and diversity.

should produce in them ever-greater covenantal obedience, which in turn will produce ever-greater blessings. This is the compounding process, and it is tied to corporate obedience. The compounding process is covenantal.

> But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;[11] And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee. If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt (Deut. 7:8–18).

A covenant-breaking society can experience long-term growth. But the period of economic growth for a covenant-breaking society is vastly shorter than the long-term growth open to a covenant-keeping society. The compounding process in any area of life produces accelerating growth. When you re-invest the earnings, and these investments also participate in the compounding process, the numbers get astronomically large very fast. The higher the rate of growth, the faster the things being compounded reach high numbers.

God was telling Israel that covenantal obedience produces growth. Growth produces victory. No matter how low the rate of growth, if

11. Here, only a thousand generations are mentioned, not thousands. The language of thousands of generations is symbolic.

the compounding process goes on long enough, it will engulf the world. It will reach environmental limits of growth. The world is not infinite.[12] *This is God's way of pointing to the end of time*. There are environmental limits to growth. There is just so much "stuff" to inherit. There is also a temporal limit to growth: the final judgment. The existence of compound growth for covenant-keepers points to the final victory in time of God's kingdom. It also points to the disinheritance of Satan's kingdom in history.

2. Cutting Off Growth

The key to compounding is continual reinvestment. It does not matter how low the rate of growth is; if this growth continues through time long enough, it will eventually swallow up everything in the environment that feeds it. This is the message of Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare. The hare achieves a rapid conquest over space, but he does not sustain it. The tortoise can achieve only a slow conquest of space, but he never quits moving forward. The tortoise eventually overtakes the sleeping hare. "Slowly but surely" is a familiar folk phrase that illustrates this principle of comparative growth. So is "little by little." Isaiah wrote: "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isa. 28:13).

God cuts off the growth of covenant-breaking societies. They grow only until their iniquity becomes full. Then they either fall or are converted to faith in God. Their growth ceases if they continue to reject God. They experience setbacks. Meanwhile, the compounding process goes on for covenant-keeping societies. Even if it is reversed temporarily, it returns.

The church is the heir of God's covenantal promise of growth. It survives all setbacks. Its growth may slow down for a time. Covenant-breaking organizations and even whole societies may outrun the church for a time. But the church is never stopped. It is like the tortoise in the fable.

Biblical principles of limited civil government, free trade, thrift, and freedom of contract produce compound economic growth. As

12. Gary North, "The Theology of the Exponential Curve," *The Freeman* (May 1970); reprinted in Gary North, *An Introduction to Christian Economics* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), ch. 8.

the West has applied these principles, it has grown rich.[13] Another major factor was confidence in the possibility of long-term economic growth. This was an implication of postmillennialism, which was rediscovered in Holland and Scotland in the seventeenth century. Then there was the issue of the legitimacy of profit-seeking. That, too, was acknowledged by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. The idea spread to the British Isles in the eighteenth century.[14]

All other social orders fell behind the West in this regard. The lure of wealth is universal. The West's principles of economics are now being adopted by societies in Asia. The economic results of this adoption have been spectacular since the end of World War II in 1945. But these principles of economic development have been secularized by their expositors. These principles have been explained as contract- based, not covenant-based. No sovereign, personal God is said to sustain the growth process. In fact, economists have been more ready than any other academic group to dismiss God as irrelevant to theory. They were the first academic profession to secularize their discussions: in the late seventeenth century.[15]

The growth of economic output has led to the growth of population. All over the non-industrial world, populations are growing as never before in man's history. In the wealthy West, however, reproduction rates are falling. Were it not for immigration, these rates would be much lower. After two centuries of compound economic growth, Europe has lost its faith in the God of the Bible and its faith in the future. No European nation is reproducing itself biologically; all are below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman.[16] Most of these nations are inviting Muslims to come and live, to do the low-paying jobs that the domestic populations refuse to do at the wages offered. Muslims have large families, although this is beginning to change in Western Europe, and has dramatically changed in Iran.[17] They are steadily replacing the indigenous populations. The same attitude regarding family size has appeared in the United States. In 1957, the average American family produced almost four children. By 1971, this

13. Nathan Rosenberg and L. E. Birdzell, Jr., *How the West Grew Rich: The Economic Transformation of the Industrial World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

14. This is the thesis of Deirdre McCloskey in a three-volume set: *The Bourgeois Trilogy* (2006–16)

15. William Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1963), ch. 6.

16. Pat Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

17. David P. Goldman, *How Civilizations Die (and Why Islam Is Dying Too)* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2011), pp. 2, 5, 10–13.

had fallen to two children, where it remains. Immigrant families, especially from Latin America, were the main exceptions. The West's inheritance is steadily being transferred to residents and citizens whose cultural roots are in the southern latitudes.

Today, we see the covenantal realm of Satan expanding. The West has generally abandoned Christianity, and the Third World has yet to adopt it, although there are revivals going on in sub-Sahara Africa, Latin America, and China.[18] But the growth in the number of covenant-breakers is dwarfing the growth of covenant-keepers. This has put the church on the defensive.

If widespread revival does not come before the end of time, and if compound economic growth nevertheless continues, then the covenantal social theory implied by the Book of Deuteronomy can be said to have been annulled at some time prior to the twentieth century, presumably by the New Covenant. If Mosaic social theory is no longer in effect, then there can be no social theory that is explicitly based on the Bible. *If there is no predictability between corporate covenant-breaking and God's corporate negative sanctions, then biblical social theory is not possible*. This would place Christians permanently at the mercy of covenant-breaking social philosophers. The wisdom of covenant-breaking man would triumph: one or another of the competing, irreconcilable systems of social cause and effect would triumph. Christians would be asked to baptize the reigning social theories of their nation. No doubt they would do so. They have done so ever since the days of the early church, when Christian apologists adopted Greek categories of philosophy in the name of Christ.[19] They have done so in the name of epistemological neutrality and, in modern times, political pluralism.[20] But this would not solve the problem of discovering what God has spoken authoritatively in New Covenant history.

Conclusion

When God's people refuse to seek His wisdom and obey His word, they forfeit many opportunities. This was true in the wilderness era. It is equally true in the modern world. When God's law is not hon-

18. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

19. Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), Part IV: "The Church Fathers."

20. See Appendix H: "Week Reed: The Politics of Compromise." See also Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

ored by God's people, they always find themselves progressively enslaved by covenant-breakers: psychologically, philosophically, culturally, economically, and politically. God prophesied this, too (Deut. 28:15–20). This corporate cursing cuts off the growth process. If corporate blessing were never restored, covenant-breakers would be given equal footing with God's people. But this cutting off of God's people is always temporary (Deut. 4:25–31).[21]

Even though one generation may forfeit great opportunities, a subsequent generation can make up for lost time. *Succession covers a multitude of losses*. The goal, then, is to train up the next generation, provide it with capital, and keep the compounding process alive. As the capital base of money, talent, wisdom, and experience continues to grow, society can live off the "interest." That is, subsequent generations are not required to save as religiously. As time goes on, the investment begins to sustain more and more projects. Dominion is extended because of the covenant community's access to a huge capital base. It can afford to make some mistakes. It need not guard its wealth so closely. But it must not live exclusively on accumulated capital. Each generation must leave its legacy to the next. Each generation should leave God's covenant society a little richer. *Biblical society is value-adding society*. This is the primary theme of Deuteronomy: adding value through inheritance.

The exodus generation had refused to honor the compounding process. They had forfeited its opportunity to inherit through Joshua's leadership. They had held on tightly to power and authority by refusing to surrender the inheritance to the fourth generation after the spies' return from the Promised Land. The third generation could have inherited through the military leadership of Joshua, but they refused. Thus, they broke the compounding process. They wandered in the wilderness until all of them died except Joshua and Caleb. Then the compounding process could begin again with an enlarged capital base: the wealth of Canaan.

21. Chapter 10.

3

DELEGATED AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL ORDER

> *And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: The* Lord *your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The* Lord *God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!) How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 1:9–13

The theocentric focus of this law is God's delegation of judicial authority to men. Authority is an aspect of point two of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. The Division of Labor

Unlike God, no man is omniscient. Men must create alternatives to omniscient judgment. Moses had been burdened with the task of rendering judgment to all the people prior to Exodus 18. But he could not govern as the patriarchs had governed. There were too many Israelites. Israel needed a judicial hierarchy.[2]

While this law resembled a seed law in the sense that it derived from the fulfilled promise of seed to Abraham, it in fact was a cross-boundary law that applies to every commonwealth larger than an extended

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion by Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), ch. 2; Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

2. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 19.

family. The problem of the division of judicial labor is to be solved by the creation of a hierarchical appeals court.

Here Moses reminded the conquest generation of the nation's first major crisis of authority. Exodus 18 records the event in detail. A long line of disputants formed outside Moses' tent every day. "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening" (Ex. 18:13). His father-in-law warned him that the magnitude of this burden as a judge would overwhelm Moses as well as the people. "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone" (v. 18). He counselled Moses to establish a hierarchical chain of command. There would be judges of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands (v. 21): 60,000, 12,000, 6,000, and 600, or 78,600 judges.[3]

These judges were untrained and untried. They could provide only imperfect justice, but they could do this on a systematic basis, day in and day out. This was better for Israel than the perfect justice provided by Moses, because in order to gain access to this justice, men would spend their days waiting in line. The value of their time was greater than the cost of imperfect justice.[4]

Moses agreed to accept Jethro's suggestion. He must have recognized the truth of Jethro's warning. There was not enough time and not enough Moses to provide justice to the entire nation. The burden of delayed justice would oppress the people. Meanwhile, Moses would waste away. And after he was dead, where would the people receive justice? Who would then render perfect justice? Better to train up a generation of judges in preparation for the transition. Better to establish a tradition of imperfect judges rendering imperfect justice on a widespread basis. Swift imperfect justice is preferable to delayed perfect justice.

B. The Decision to Delegate

One of the most precious of scarce economic resources is managerial talent. It commands a high price in a competitive, growing economy. No one knows how to mass produce it. There are so many competing

3. This was Rashi's eleventh-century estimate: Rabbi Solomon (Shlomo) Yitzhaki, known as Rashi, *Chumash with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary*, A. M. Silbermann and M. Rosenbaum, translators, 5 vols. (Jerusalem: Silbermann Family, [1934] 1985 [Jewish year: 5745]), II, p. 95.

4. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch. 19.

management training systems that no one knows which one is most effective. In different kinds of businesses, different management skills are required. Because the supply of effective managers is limited, they command a high price. Societies seek substitutes for managerial talent, such as compensation by commission (self-motivation) and computerized information.

The creative person usually finds it difficult to delegate all but the simplest tasks. He does not trust his subordinates' efforts. He may be willing to delegate to those who have special information in areas he is unfamiliar with, but the more talented he is in several areas, the less willing he is to delegate.

The division of labor is hampered by those who refuse to delegate. The English economist David Ricardo offered an example of two producers, one of whom is more productive than his trading partner in producing a particular product. Because his skill is even greater in producing some other product, which commands a higher price, which his trading partner wants to buy, he should allow the trading partner to produce the first product and then trade for it. Similarly, a soldier who can shoot straight when under fire, but who also types fast, should concentrate on his unique advantage: shooting. There are more skilled typists than skilled shooters. Their value to an army is less than the value of straight-shooting, front-line soldiers. Even if the typist is a less-skilled typist than the straight-shooter is, the army could be overrun if the men on the front lines cannot shoot straight. That semi-skilled typist should be recruited from a pool of men who cannot shoot straight under fire.

The general who staffs his headquarters with near-sighted men who are skilled managers would be wise to delegate management to them. His job is to design better battle plans than the enemy general does. Only if the task of the senior commander is to hold together skilled generals who are in competition with each other should he be known for his management skills.[5]

In effect, the delegator is asking his subordinates to trade with him. They will provide certain forms of output within the company; he will provide other forms. His job is to put together a team whose combined output is greater than the sum of the individual parts of that team would have been, had he not organized it. If he is suc-

5. Dwight D. Eisenhower is a classic example of a manager-general. His job, 1942 to 1945, was to keep British, American, and Commonwealth commanding generals from undermining each other.

cessful, he multiplies his efforts. He gains the output of others in a combined effort.

C. Multiplication and Authority

Moses offered a prayer of blessing in the middle of his exposition on the hierarchy of civil authority. The King James translators placed this prayer in parentheses. "(The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)" (v. 11). He had just told them that God had already multiplied their numbers. They had witnessed this growth. Now, he prayed for more.

This is the dominion impulse. It involves the multiplication of all assets, including population.[6] He immediately asked the proper question: How could he bear the burden placed on him as the supreme civil judge? He saw clearly that as the number of people multiplied, the number of disputes would multiply. It is likely that the number of disputes would rise even faster than the number of people. Without imposing new rules of behavior, doubling the number of people in a room will more than double the noise, as people talk louder to overcome the noise of additional people talking. The same is true of lawsuits in a litigious society.

Moses had understood that the blessing of additional people would soon become a curse if the judicial order were not restructured. Jethro offered the solution: a series of appeals courts. Any growing organization faces a similar problem. As the number of details increases, there must be institutional alterations to keep the details from overwhelming the system. A well-designed system must either find ways of standardizing ways of dealing with these details or else find ways of resisting growth. For example, a company that pursues growth must avoid the temptation to tinker with the structure of the firm in order to deal with lots of unique problems in unique ways. It must devise standard ways to deal with unique problems. If it tries to deal with too many unique problems, its ability to grow will be thwarted. It will become bogged down in details. It must treat unique problems as parts of larger aggregates to which familiar rules apply. It must smooth over the small distinctions. This is especially true of a price-competitive firm that seeks growth through cost-cutting and mass production.

6. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch. 1.

Similarly, a civil government must resist the temptation to solve every social problem, review every case, and establish case law precedents by creating solutions to difficult and non-standard disputes. "Hard cases make bad law" is an ancient saying in the common law tradition.

There must be an increase in authority as complexity increases. The question is this: Where should this increase take place? At the top of the social system or the bottom? The traditional socialist argument is that increasing social complexity requires more centralization and more planning at the top.[7] Government must assert its authority, central government especially. This argument was challenged by F. A. Hayek in the late 1930s and 1940s. As societies grow more complex, he argued, they should decentralize. Central planners do not possess sufficient knowledge to micro-manage an advanced and growing economy. Social complexity is too great. The only source of knowledge that is sufficient to manage this growing complexity is the free market, with its price system, its sanctions (profit and loss), its specialization of knowledge, and its decentralized power structure.[8]

Because God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, complexity is not a threat to Him. He can decentralize authority to man without any fear of losing His sovereignty. The same pattern is mandated for man: the willingness to decentralize, to delegate authority. By delegating authority, men reap the benefits of the division of labor. Others are given opportunities to serve in a leadership capacity. The talents of more men are called forth by a system of rules that allows those with skills to rise in the hierarchy.

Second, there are multiple hierarchies in a biblical society. There is no unitary system of authority which grants all the favors and receives all the acclaim. There are many areas of service and many chains of command. The civil hierarchy is severely limited by biblical law in what it can lawfully do. It can suppress public evil through the imposition of negative sanctions. But this leaves open many other areas of productivity, power, and honor within a biblical society.

Thus, by limiting the power of civil government as well as its jurisdiction, biblical law creates the judicial basis of a society that can

7. The classic statement of this position is chapter 3 of Frederick Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1882). This chapter first appeared in Engels' *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (1878), Part III, Chapter II. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), vol. 25, pp. 254–71.

8. F. A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society" (1945); reprinted in Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), ch. 4.

grow in complexity without mandating the concentration of power to preserve social order. In fact, an increase in social order should accompany the multiplication of wealth, numbers, and knowledge. What creates social disorder is sin and its outward manifestations, not complexity as such. If the increasing complexity of society is the result of voluntary human action under God's law—self-government under God—then it is not a threat to the social order. On the contrary, this complexity is a blessing for the social order. When each man can find his unique area of maximum service—to God and man—a social order flourishes. The extension of the division of labor allows men to match their highly specialized productive talents with customer demand. The multiplication of producers extends each man's authority by narrowing his area of service. This increase in an individual's authority is the outcome of his increased productivity. He has access to additional capital because investors shift their investments from less productive employers of workers to more productive workers. It is not necessary for the state to centralize its authority in a doomed quest for greater social order. If it does, there will be a decrease in social order.

When men complain that "things are getting too complicated these days," they mean that they are having trouble keeping up with social change. Their surroundings are changing fast. Yet every man loves to discover an opportunity to better himself that had not existed before. *But every new opportunity adds to the complexity of society*. With every new opportunity comes the potential for a better world. The fact is, a member of some primitive tribe can learn to operate an electric light switch as effortlessly and as absent-mindedly as any modern man does. Within a few months, he will want his own motorbike. Social complexity comes in enticingly simple steps.

If some people want simplicity, they can buy it. The Amish live simple lives, but most people think the price is too high: eighth-grade educations, no automobiles, no computers, no electricity (except in the barn), and no buttons or zippers. The visible mark of the true "plain person" is hook and loop clothing. The visible mark of heresy is the button and eye. A zipper indicates full-scale apostasy. And so it should, for the zipper is one of modern man's most amazing little technologies, so simple by most men's standards that they pay no attention to it. Yet who can explain it? Like a sewing machine's stitch, the zipper is incomprehensible to most people. Dedicated resistance to zippers necessarily marks the anti-complexity worldview of the Amish: the temptation of

the seemingly simple and cheap device that opens the door to complexity on a scale that no previous civilization could have imagined. To the Amish, a zipper is as welcome as it would have been to the high priest of Israel, had one been installed on the veil of the temple.

When sin multiplies, however, an increase in state authority may be called for. This extension of authority should not be centralized. The threat to liberty of central authority is too great. Even with God's agent Moses as the supreme civil judge, Jethro warned that Israel would suffer. Moses possessed too much authority. Better to decentralize state authority to untrained judges than to concentrate authority in one man. Such centralized authority will undermine freedom, reduce complexity, reduce the division of labor, and cut short the multiplication of wealth. Men will stand in long lines seeking justice rather than getting on with living.

Conclusion

Moses had to delegate authority in order to save himself and the nation from exhaustion. The complexity of a large society overwhelms the best efforts of the best men at the top to deal with the inevitable disputes that arise among men. The solution is judicial decentralization and the delegation of judicial authority. This brings forth new knowledge that would not have manifested itself in a system of concentrated political power.

But how are disputes to be handled? By a fixed law, a predictable legal order, and self-government. Biblical social order begins with grace. The civil manifestation of this grace is biblical law. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). To deal with the multiplication of disputes, society requires the multiplication of judges, not all of whom are civil magistrates. A society that seeks multiplication as well as the concentration of political power will find that these goals are unattainable, long term. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 provided the most graphic proof of this principle in modern times, and perhaps in all history: an enormous empire, based on the concentration of power, simply collapsed in a period of a few weeks, at the cost of only three lives. The Soviet Union had strangled itself in bureaucracy and misinformation, and had lost the will to resist, let alone expand. The top-down hierarchy of the centrally planned economy becomes unproductive and socially brittle.

A biblically structured social order reveals a multiplicity of hierarchies, each with its own jurisdiction, none with final earthly jurisdiction, all governed by God's Bible-revealed law. There must be ordained judges in a series of appeals courts, both civil and ecclesiastical. Voters in both church and state must retain the authority to revoke the ordination of these judges. Where the voters' authority is absent, in either church or state, the institutional supreme court inevitably becomes a legislative body. It asserts some form of divine right theory: the denial of any earthly appeal beyond the court's authority.[9]

9. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 10.

4

THE FACE OF MAN

Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

DEUTERONOMY 1:17

The theocentric focus of this passage is God as judge. Sanctions are associated with point four of the biblical covenant, yet chapters 1:6–4:49 are categorized as belonging to point two: hierarchy. Two observations are relevant here: (1) sanctions are always associated with authority, i.e., the legal right to impose sanctions; (2) sanctions—positive and negative—are the means of inheritance/disinheritance. The God of the Bible was calling the fourth generation (Gen. 15:16)[1] to impose negative sanctions on Canaan on His behalf. Warfare was to be the means of their inheritance. They should not be afraid of the Canaanites. Once in control of the Promised Land, they should also not be afraid of evil-doers. A hierarchical appeals court must settle these judicial issues.

A. Judicial Fear: An Inescapable Concept

Men are to fear God more than they fear men. Moses warned judges not to fear any man to the point of rendering false judgment in God's name. He who is ordained by law to speak as God's judicial representative must speak an honest word. This is the basis of the overriding principle of biblical law: the rule of law. "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you"

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

(Ex. 12:49).[2] The corollary to the rule of law is the principle found in this verse: there must be no respect of persons. This law is repeated throughout Scripture.[3]

There is a theocentric framework for this law: God as supreme judge. "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11). "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him" (Eph. 6:9). "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (I Peter 1:17). The warning is clear: "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors" (James 2:9). Judges must render impartial judgment in God's name, on His authority. This was not a seed law a land law, or a priestly law. It was a cross-boundary law—perhaps *the* cross-boundary law: the rule of God's law.[4]

The governing principle of biblical civil justice is victim's rights.[5] To achieve the rule of law in specific case law applications, the judge must protect the victim. The judge must declare his judgment in terms of God's law and the evidence in front of the court. Nothing must interfere with his declaration: not bribes, not favoritism, and not fear of repercussions. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's."

The civil judge hands down judgment in God's name. He acts as a representative of God, declaring God's judgment in history. This is what makes a civil judge a minister of God. Men are to fear him because of his office as God's judicial representative. "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4).[6]

Men must fear God. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The Old Testament declares this repeatedly. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the

2. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 14.

3. Deuteronomy 16:19; II Chronicles 19:7; Proverbs 24:23; 28:21.

4. On these categories of the Mosaic law, see Appendix J.

5. Gary North, *Victim's Rights: The Biblical View of Civil Justice* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

6. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 11.

fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:2).[7] Men will either fear God or fear some aspect of the creation. They will either begin with God's wisdom or man's wisdom, but *the beginning of wisdom is fear*. The man who fears nothing is a fool. He has not understood the threat of God's eternal negative sanctions. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

The judge is cautioned not to fear the face of man. This language is obviously symbolic. No one fears another person's face. Men fear the vengeful impulses which lie behind grim faces. "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Gen. 4:5). Cain's face foretold trouble to come for Abel. No judge is to fear such a face. He is to fear God and hell, not those standing before the bar of justice.

Unrighteous men are to fear a righteous judge. In a perverse society under the rule of evil men, a righteous judge must live under the threat of negative sanctions. Thus, *judicial fear is an inescapable concept*. Either covenant-breakers fear judges who uphold God's law, or else covenant-keepers fear judges who uphold a rival legal order—or should fear them. But political pluralists prefer it this way.

B. Time Perspective and Sanctions

Basic to all human action is the concept of time preference. We act in the present. We are responsible in the present. We consider the future when we are making our decisions in the present, but we value the present more than we do the future. We apply a discount to the future. Economists call this discount the rate of interest.[8]

People vary with respect to their assessment of the importance of the future. Some people are more future-oriented than others. They understand that success in the future is heavily dependent on actions taken in the present. They are willing to sacrifice present enjoyment for the sake of future enjoyment. They save money at a much lower rate of interest compared to the rate which must be offered to a present-oriented person in order to persuade him to save.

Edward Banfield has defined class position in terms of time perspective. An upper-class person is more future-oriented than a middle-class person, who is in turn more future-oriented than a lower-class

7. Job 28:28, Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33.

8. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1949), ch. 19.

person.[9] An upper-class person may not have more money early in life than a middle-class person—a medical student, for example—but over time his devotion to thrift and hard work will normally produce personal wealth.

This insight regarding time perspective has implications for law enforcement, especially sanctions. If a person is extremely present-oriented, he cares little about the distant consequences of his actions. He discounts future pain so heavily that present enjoyment looms far larger in his decision-making. Even if he thinks he may be caught, tried, convicted, and sentenced, he dismisses the end result as relatively meaningless. He dramatically subordinates *then* to *now*.

Because God's law is supposed to be implemented without respect to persons, both the present-oriented person and the future-oriented person face the same civil sanctions. The existence of time preference tells us that a greater number of present-oriented people will commit crimes than future-oriented people. They fear the future less. The threatened civil sanctions do not appear equally threatening. Economic theory tells us that when the price of anything is lowered, more of it will be demanded. The price of criminal behavior is perceived to be lower by a present-oriented person than by a future-oriented person.

C. Capital Punishment

To deal with extreme present-orientation, God's law establishes the sanction of execution. The magnitude and permanence of this negative sanction impresses even the present-oriented criminal. Discounting death to zero price takes a unique degree of commitment to the present. A hero may do this for the sake of a greater cause. Most criminals are not this present-oriented.

The biblical case for capital punishment rests on the principle that some crimes are an especial affront to God. He demands that the convicted criminal be delivered immediately into His court. In the case of murder, the victim cannot announce a lesser penalty. Unlike Jesus on the cross, who asked God to forgive those who persecuted Him, the murder victim is silent. So, God requires the criminal's execution.

A positive side effect of capital punishment is the inability of the criminal to gain revenge against those who condemned him. Those who commit crimes so heinous that the state may not legally punish them with anything less than execution are unable to threaten judges

9. Edward Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), ch. 3.

and jurors. When the state substitutes other penalties, the criminal can later seek revenge.[10] In the name of leniency to criminals, the state places at risk those law-abiding citizens who announced judgment in God's name.

In the United States, the abandonment of capital punishment was accompanied by an unprecedented increase in crime, 1960 to 1975.[11] It was an era in which traditional conservative humanism was visibly replaced by various forms of liberal humanism. The state substituted new sanctions for old. It sought to heal evil men rather than condemn them. It sought to rehabilitate criminals rather than punish them. The healing state became the lenient state—lenient on criminals, but harsh on their victims and those who lived in fear of criminals. This was consistent with left-wing humanism's concept of the state as an agency of healing, of positive sanctions.

The previous decade had launched an era of judicial activism,[12] but in 1960 there were still signs culturally that an older conservative humanism prevailed in the thinking of the general public. Yet within one decade, 1960 to 1970, this older attitude was abandoned by policy-makers and judicial theorists. For decades, liberal elitists and academics had called into question the legitimacy of traditional negative sanctions against crime. The 1950s marked the last decade of the common man's dam of resolve. As Irving Kristol wrote, "Prior to the victory of modern liberal dogmas in the early 1950s, the police and the courts could cope with common street crime, as well as burglaries or robberies, without having to defer to a catalog of criminals' constitutional rights, most of which, at the time, were still undiscovered. It may have made for less perfect justice, but it did deter wanton criminality among the young and ensured a more trusting, less fearful society."[13] A new judicial activism silenced conservative critics. The book title chosen by Karl Menninger, one of the reformers, said it all: *The Crime of Punishment*.[14] The liberal elite succeeded in persuading voters to abandon "wild west" justice: the justice of predictable negative sanctions. The result was an unprecedented increase in crime.

10. The classic American western *High Noon* (1952) is built on this theme.

11. James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), ch. 1; U.S. Senator James L. Buckley, "Foreword," Frank Carrington, *The Victims* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1975).

12. The symbolic figure here was U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, beginning with his appointment to the Court in 1953. The "Warren Court" was decidedly liberal.

13. Irving Kristol, "The Way We Were," *Wall Street Journal* (July 14, 1995).

14. Karl Menninger, M.D., *The Crime of Punishment* (New York: Viking, 1968).

D. Liberty and Justice

Liberty requires the rule of law. The rule of law means predictable law. Men must believe that evil-doers will be punished if the evidence testifies against them. Their victims will be economically rewarded by criminals, even if this means selling the criminals into slavery until their victims are repaid.

The predictability of the law increases the likelihood that negative civil sanctions will be imposed. The criminal already discounts the personal cost of negative future sanctions. High time preference—a steep discounting of the future—is one aspect of criminal behavior generally.[15] If the criminal understands that most crimes go unsolved and that most solved crimes go unpunished, his heavy discounting of the future drives his present costs of crime almost to zero. This increases the amount of crime in society: as the cost of something falls, more of it is demanded. By increasing the predictability of negative sanctions, the legal system decreases the amount of crime by raising its cost to criminals.

There is another aspect of discounting: the victim's. The victim estimates the likelihood of negative sanctions' being imposed on the criminal. If the likelihood is low, why go to the trouble of seeking justice? Why take the risk? Also, will the victim be rewarded if the criminal is convicted? Is there the possibility of positive sanctions? The more likely the positive sanctions, the more likely the victim will cooperate with law-enforcement officials in solving the crime.

The first stage in the retreat of a society from the rule of biblical law is the substitution of an ideal of social revenge for the biblical ideal of victim's rights. The ideal of victim's rights is always abandoned by the humanist state, which regards all crime as crime against the state. The humanist state imposes negative sanctions, but always at taxpayers' expense. The symbol of this legal order is the prison. The negative sanction of prison brings no positive sanctions to victims except in the sense of revenge. The biblical judicial ideal of victim's rights fades; it is replaced either by a theory of social revenge or by a theory of criminal rehabilitation. These rival theories can trade places back and forth in the public's estimation, as each is tried and found wanting.

In both cases, the citizenry fears the criminal. In the first case, the criminal is locked up for years. He is removed from the presence of

15. Edward Banfield, "Present-Orientedness and Crime," in Randy E. Barnett and John Hegel III (eds.), *Assessing the Criminal: Restitution, Retribution, and the Legal Process* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger, 1977), pp. 140–41.

law-abiding people. He associates with a caste of professional criminals in prison. He is prohibited from making economic restitution to his victims. Citizens deny the criminal's social redemption through personal restitution. They have no trust in biblical law as a means of restoration. They trust only in the state's vengeance. "Lock him up and throw away the key!" In the second case, he is paroled early and released back into society before he makes restitution to his victims. Citizens receive into their midst hardened criminals. They learn to fear these men, who in turn fear neither God nor law-abiding men.

When the fear of evil men undermines a community's fear of God, that community is eventually going to experience tyranny. The worst men will claw their way to the top through the imposition of fear. A subculture based on rule by fear has an enormous competitive advantage in a society that fears men more than it fears God. When this subculture becomes dominant, the rule of law becomes rule by criminals.

The mark of a community's commitment to liberty is its commitment to biblical law. God's law must be enforced. The countenances of the citizenry must be set against the countenances of criminals. The citizenry represents God. Their ordained civil agents represent them before the face of God and represent God before the faces of criminals. Civil authority flows from God to citizens to the civil magistrate.[16] They are judges insofar as they bring sanctions, positive or negative, against their ordained representatives. They are told not to fear the face of man.

Conclusion

The rule of law requires the honoring of the principle of no respect for persons. God's law is unified, for it reflects His moral unity. It is universally binding, for He is universally sovereign. Judgment should not be made unpredictable through the imposition of unpredictable sanctions. "Different strokes for different folks" is not a biblical principle of justice.

When the sense of justice departs from a society, that society becomes vulnerable to appeals by criminals, guilt-manipulating politicians, revolutionaries, tyrants, and others who offer to get even with the present order: the politics of revenge. When statist revenge is substituted for personal restitution, a society searches in vain for a judge

16. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 4.

who will bring stability, peace, and justice. When statist rehabilitation is substituted for personal restitution, a society also searches in vain for stability, peace, and justice. In both cases, liberty is at risk. The predictability of just laws becomes either the predictability of unjust laws or the unpredictability of any law.

The issue here is hierarchy. Civil law is enforced by legal representatives who serve as God's agents and also as the community's delegated agents. The judge must not fear law-breakers, for he declares God's law. He must fear God, not men. Criminals must fear civil judges, who speak in the name of God, and who mandate God's civil sanctions. One mark of a disintegrating social order is the criminals' loss of fear of the civil law. When judges in turn fear law-breakers, this fear spreads to the entire society.

Courage is as basic to law-enforcement as it is to military service. There is supposed to be a covenantal hierarchy of fear: judges must fear both God and the voters; criminals must fear God and the judges. The society of Satan is based on a perverse hierarchy: criminals fear other criminals; judges and citizens fear criminals. They fear the faces of evil men.

5

BUREAUCRATIC COUNSEL

Behold, the LORD *thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the* LORD *God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe.*

DEUTERONOMY 1:21–23

The theocentric principle of this law is God in His office as supreme military commander. He gives orders. These orders are to be obeyed. In His capacity as supreme commander, He possesses omniscience, an incommunicable attribute. Men are not omniscient. They require means of increasing the supply of accurate information.

A. God's Spies

In this case, Israel needed spies. The spies would enter the land of Canaan, evaluate its vulnerability to invasion, and return to speak accurately on God's behalf. They were to think God's thoughts after Him, as faithful representatives. Thinking God's thoughts after Him is part of the hierarchy of covenantal dominion.

Moses here recounts the story of the exodus generation's rebellion against God's command that they immediately conquer Canaan. God gave the command, and the people did not initially reject it. Instead, they added a suggestion, namely, that they be allowed to gather information regarding the best route into Canaan for military purposes. Moses approved of this request. He selected a representative from each of the tribes to conduct the reconnaissance operation.

What appeared to be a sensible pre-war tactic turned out to be the first in a series of retreats. The nation did not want to challenge the residents of Canaan, but their leaders did not admit this in the early stages of the operation. Moses went on to recount the story of their rebellion, how the exodus generation and those men old enough in the next generation to have participated in the conquest had been prohibited from entering the land. Only Caleb and Joshua were excepted (Deut. 1:36, 38). They had shown resolve regarding the conquest; for this, they were spared the ignominy of having their personal inheritance in the land revoked by God. The next generation would inherit: "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it" (v. 39).

God's negative sanction of disinheritance matched the nation's negative strategy of non-confrontation. He wanted Israel to disinherit the Canaanites; this negative sanction would have been a positive sanction for Israel. This was what economists call a zero-sum game: the gains of the winners are offset by the losses of the losers. Warfare has this characteristic. Israel wanted to avoid war; so, the spies recommended non-confrontation. This would have permanently disinherited Israel and permanently confirmed the continuity of inheritance in Canaan. *Disinheritance is an inescapable concept*. Either Israel would be disinherited or the Canaanites would be. By escaping the sanction of war, Israel wanted to escape war's negative sanctions. But this granted immunity to Canaanites. It also constituted a negative sanction against Israel's heirs. Ultimately, it constituted a negative sanction against God, who had promised Abraham that the fourth generation would inherit (Gen. 15:16).[1] Had Israel's strategy of non-confrontation been allowed to stand, God would have been exposed before His enemies as one who did not fulfill His promises.

B. A Matter of Strategy

God had a strategy: the conquest of Canaan. This strategy was announced three times: to Abraham once and to Moses twice, at the beginning and end of the wilderness period. first, He had told Abraham that his heirs would conquer Canaan in the fourth generation after their descent into Egypt. This was Joshua's generation. Second, He had told the exodus generation to begin the offensive campaign

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

(Deut. 1:21). This was their responsibility, God said, yet anyone who knew of the promise to Abraham would have known that this generation would not conquer. The only way for the third generation to participate in the conquest of Canaan was to surrender leadership to the fourth generation. Third, at the end of the wilderness period, God told Moses and Joshua that the conquest must begin soon. This was carried out under Joshua.

The conquest of Canaan was ethically and prophetically mandatory. The question was: Which generation would carry it out? Those to whom the command to march into Canaan was first given soon rebelled against this strategy. They rebelled, not by citing the specific details of the Abrahamic promise—fourth generation, not third—but by announcing that the Promised Land was not worth the military effort to inherit. "And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature" (Num. 13:32). In short, they tampered with the visible evidence. They said that this place could not possibly be the Promised Land of milk and honey. The land ate up its normal inhabitants; you had to be a giant to prosper.

The recalcitrant captains should have gone to Moses with this request. "Tell God that we are not ready to lead this campaign. He told our father Abraham that the fourth generation after the descent into Egypt would conquer Canaan. We are not that appointed generation. We respect the details of His prophecy. We do not want to get ahead of God's prophetic timetable. We also do not want to fall behind. We are ready to transfer leadership of the army of the Lord to our older sons, under Joshua's command." Had they put their request in terms of God's promise to Abraham, they would have demonstrated their commitment to His word. Instead, they tried to thwart His word by declaring the land unfit to conquer.

God's strategy for Canaan was military conquest: the imposition of final negative historical sanctions. The details of this operation were left to Moses and the captains of God's holy army. God did not tell them the best route into Canaan. He did not do their tactical work for them. He announced to Moses the timing of the conquest, but He left to Moses and his advisors the responsibility for implementing the general strategy. That is, God delegated responsibility to His designated representatives.

Moses accepted the offer of the captains to allow spies to go into the land for reconnaissance purposes. This seemed to be a tactical matter. What he did not understand until after their return was that this request was not tactical; it was strategic. The generation of the exodus had no intention of risking their lives to conquer Canaan. God had spoken, but perhaps they could buy more time. The request regarding the tactical reconnaissance operation was their means of delaying the implementation of the mandated strategy.

C. Rule by Committee

God announced the strategy. The task of the supreme commander is to design a military strategy. Military strategy is focused on a narrow goal: victory or stalemate, never defeat. This is why warfare lends itself to the establishment of a supreme commander. A society agrees on the fundamental goal: the avoidance of defeat. Because there is this unanimity of opinion and a narrowly defined performance standard, it is possible for a central planner to design a strategy. A military strategy lends itself to unitary decision-making. A senior representative of the nation must implement a wartime military strategy. The nation's other representatives may approve or disapprove of the strategy; they may or may not be able to veto it if they do not approve. Lower-level representatives also affect strategy through approving or disapproving something that the senior representative has submitted for consideration. A committee cannot effectively design a strategy. The committee's division of labor is valid for counsel, but not for innovation.

1. A Multitude of Counsellors

The Bible recommends a multitude of counsellors:

> Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety (Prov. 11:14).
>
> Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established (Prov. 15:22).
>
> For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety (Prov. 24:6).

The larger the multitude of counsellors, the less likely that they will be able to devise an alternate strategy. *The larger the group is, the less likely the agreement*. A strong ruler knows that he is far less threatened

by a large group of advisors than a small group. It costs too much for the members of a large group to combine against him. There are many competing strategic details to resolve, many competing egos to assuage. The Bible recommends a multitude of counsellors; it does not recommend a multitude of strategists. This system of multiple counsellors is designed to *increase the wisdom* of the decision-maker and at the same time *strengthen his authority*.

This process of *centralized strategic planning through diversified counsel* is mandatory in military matters, and this is also true of economic organizations. But counsel is not the same as strategic decision-making. Devising a corporate strategy is the responsibility of one person who has been delegated the authority by the owners to represent the corporation. He is held responsible by owners or whoever is legally represented by this supreme commander. This is not true of counsellors. When asked, counselors raise objections, comment on risks, suggest alternatives, and generally enable the commander to count the costs of his strategy. They do not design a strategy.

Jesus used the analogy of military strategy to describe personal decision-making. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have suficient to finish it? Lest haply [it happen], after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage [ambassador], and desireth conditions of peace" (Luke 14:28–32).[2] We are supposed to count the costs before we begin the action. Counsellors help us to estimate costs more accurately.

Committees can veto plans; they are rarely able to establish plans. The voices of the members are not unified. The division of intellectual labor produces cacophony in a committee. The unitary design needed for a successful strategy does not come from a committee. Folk wisdom understands this: "A camel is a horse designed by a committee." The division of intellectual labor does not produce a unified design, because none of the committee's members is willing to take final responsibility for a strategy created by all the other members.

2. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 35.

The supreme commander trusts his own judgment more than he trusts the judgment of a committee. He relies on a committee to suggest several alternatives; he does not rely on it to produce a strategy. He refuses to be held responsible for a strategy designed by competing men who will not take personal responsibility for the committee's collective decision, if any. He understands that committees can sometimes veto a strategy. Committees can select someone to design a new strategy, but they cannot devise an effective strategy.

2. To Veto God

Israel's spies attempted to veto God's announced strategy, but they proposed no agreed-upon alternative. God had announced the overall strategy and the timing. Any attempt on the part of the captains or the spies to thwart that strategic plan was a form of rebellion. God did not ask the Israelites to accept or reject His strategy. He allowed them only to seek out information which would have enabled Moses to design tactics to implement God's overall strategy.

The committee of spies returned to give an account of Canaan that was at odds with everything God had told them. Only Caleb and Joshua publicly defended the basis of God's strategy, namely, the vulnerability of the Canaanites to immediate invasion. "If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey" (Num. 14:8). For his public defense of God's strategy, Joshua was appointed by God to succeed Moses and to direct Israel's inheritance: "But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it" (Deut. 1:38). He and Caleb could have led the army to victory four decades earlier than they eventually did.

Had the spies been allowed to speak authoritatively for Israel, God would have executed the entire nation (Num. 14:11–12). Canaan would have remained occupied by the Amorites indefinitely. That is, the Amorites would have inherited the inheritance which God had promised to Abraham's seed. It was this possibility that Moses raised in his debate with God: God's vow to destroy the Amorites would not be fulfilled; so, His enemies would mock Him (vv. 13–16). God heeded this warning (v. 20). God then applied negative sanctions. The spies had sought to veto God's strategy, but God vetoed them. He executed them on the spot with a plague (v. 37).

As is so often the case, 10 of the spies had a hidden agenda. It reflected the nation's hidden agenda, which became clear only in ret-

rospect: to avoid military conflict with Canaanites. To conceal this agenda, they recommended the reconnaissance. God knew their agenda, yet He did not tell Moses to call a halt to the reconnaissance. He allowed Moses to approve the spies' tactic. Moses would learn soon enough what the spies' hidden agenda was. The spies' report discouraged the nation. "And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there" (Deut. 1:27–28).

The committee's report had undermined the Lord's recently announced strategy: to invade Canaan immediately (v. 21). Moses could not persuade them to believe God (v. 32). The authority of the committee's majority report was overpowering when combined with the fears of that generation, fears which the people had repeatedly expressed to Moses. The spies had corroborated what the nation had feared: the Promised Land was filled with giants. Despite the fact that God cut down all of the nay-sayers on the committee, the people did not change their minds regarding God's strategy. The majority report had truly spoken for them judicially. Only Moses' intercessory prayer had saved them from God's wrath.

D. Sovereign Counsellors

The people who are represented by a decision-maker are sovereign over him. They have the authority to thwart their economic and political representatives. God holds them responsible for what their leaders do.[3] This is why biblical law places centralized military decision-making authority into the hands of one man. The people can see who is responsible for making plans. This is much less true when committees make the plans. Members of committees seek to hide from the derivatively sovereign people. They seek to avoid the limelight. They seek to transfer personal responsibility by spreading it among many others. When things go wrong, a committee is like a circle of men, each pointing to the man next to him. "He did it. Blame him." The supreme example in the Bible is Adam blaming Eve, and by implication, God, who gave him Eve.

3. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 4.

1. Legal Sovereignty

Does this biblical structure of authority imply central planning? In military matters, yes. In military affairs, the decisions of the strategist have the characteristic of being all or nothing. A mistake can lead to national defeat. So, societies have adopted a single chain of military command.[4] What about economic planning? Is it also to be centralized? Within one firm, yes. The owner or senior manager has to be held accountable. Accountable to whom? First to the lenders, then to the holders, but finally to the customers. The share owners are legally sovereign; the customers are economically authoritative.[5] There has to be a central officer who announces the company's general strategy. In a profit-seeking enterprise, the primary strategy is to make a profit. The company's general rules and compensation schemes set the boundaries of profit-making efforts. These are announced and enforced by central management. Senior managers allow lower-echelon managers and salesmen to apply the general rules to specific cases, where central management does not have immediate access to local information.[6]

For the owners of a corporate enterprise to exercise legal sovereignty, managers must be under the control of the owners. Owners must be allowed to replace managers. In the case of public corporations, the owners are the shareholders. This is why it is important for business law to allow proxy fights and corporate take-overs. If the diversified owners of shares of the company are not allowed by existing management or the civil government to throw out the existing management, then their authority as owners is thwarted. Government regulations that prohibit "predatory corporate raiders" inevitably subsidize the existing managers, increasing their immunity from profit-seeking shareholders who would prefer to sell their shares at a profit to raiders, who in turn see ways of increasing the market value of the company's assets and shares.[7]

---

4. Even here, the Mosaic law divided national authority. Both a civil representative and then two priests had to blow the pair of trumpets: first the civil ruler, then the priests (Num. 10:2–9).

5. On the distinction between legal sovereignty and economic authority, see North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, ch. 25:B:1. Owners tell managers what to do; customers tell owners and managers if what was done was profitable.

6. Ludwig von Mises, *Bureaucracy* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1944), pp. 31–36.

7. Henry G. Manne, *Insider Trading and the Stock Market* (New York: Free Press, 1966), ch. 11.

2. Customer Authority

In a free market economy, the ultimate institutional sovereign is collective: customers. Their individual decisions to buy or sell produce a collective result: *an objective array of prices*. Their decisions also produce profits or losses for specific sellers. So, final sovereignty in a free market is diffuse. The free market allows buyers and sellers to come together and make individual exchanges voluntarily. *Because ownership is diffuse, sovereignty is diffuse*. Because accurate knowledge is diffuse, ownership is diffuse, for people specialize in those productive services that they understand best and therefore possess a comparative advantage. The free market rewards the pooling of accurate knowledge through the price system. The competitive bidding of *buyers against buyers* and *sellers against sellers* produces an array of publicly available prices. These prices convey information to other buyers and sellers. They also convey motivation for sellers to meet the demands of customers on a cost-effective basis.

In a free market, the goals of asset owners are complex and shifting. The operations of a free market are not like a military campaign. In a military campaign, the goals of citizens are highly focused: the avoidance of defeat, preferably through victory. The narrow focus of this common goal mandates central planning by a supreme military commander. Military victory through the concentration of specific military forces is very different from economic victory, which comes mainly through the pooling of highly diffused knowledge—the most expensive economic resource—through a system of rewards and punishments, i.e., profit and loss.

In a free market, the customers are a multitude of counsellors. Sellers must meet customer demand profitably, or else they will go out of business. The counsellors possess legal authority: the legal right to buy or refrain from buying. They also possess economic authority: they own an asset (money) that they can use to buy other assets. The opinions of these counsellors can be ignored by sellers, but always at a price: reduced sales, reduced income. Thus, senior decision-makers in profit-seeking firms must take seriously the opinions of customers, whose counsel has money attached to it.

The Bible exhorts decision-makers to seek a multitude of counsellors. In economic affairs, this means that they must seek out representatives whose opinions reflect the opinions of the customers. This is why statistical sampling techniques are widely used by businesses. This is also why such techniques are used by politicians seeking election in a democracy.

In a free society, the counsellors are sovereign, either as customers or voters. They bring sanctions, both positive and negative, through money or votes. Decision-makers must pay attention to counsellors when the counsellors are armed with such sanctions. The counsellors possess lawful authority. In the free market, as in a representative democracy, the biblical principle of a multitude of counsellors is greatly honored through appropriate systems of sanctions.

In an unfree society, central planners strip customers and voters of any meaningful authority. The result is always the same: reduced wealth. This is why socialism always impoverishes all but the senior politicians and their favored counsellors. After the fall of Communism in the late 1980s in Eastern Europe and in the USSR in 1991, citizens of the formerly Marxist tyrannies learned just how far behind the capitalist West they had been. Their richest leaders were poor by comparison to the West's middle class, a fact that the leaders had learned at the 1980 Olympics, which were held in Moscow. Visitors from the West were visibly far richer than the Soviet tyrants. This huge disparity of wealth could no longer be easily ignored in the USSR. The Communist leaders' wealth was a joke; they were being laughed at by the West. The West's political conservatives could dismiss the USSR as nothing more than "Bangladesh with missiles."[8] This condescension by the West broke the tyrants' confidence in the benefits the Communist system had produced for them. Within a decade, European Communism was abandoned in a series of bloodless coups. European Communist parties changed their names.

Western college professors were the last to learn. As late as 1989, the world's most popular college-level economics textbook still asserted: "The Soviet economy is proof that, contrary to what many skeptics had earlier believed, a socialist command economy can function and even thrive."[9] Within two years, the Soviet Union no longer existed. It visibly collapsed economically in 1989 and politically in December of 1991.

Conclusion

God was Israel's strategist. Moses was His mouthpiece, His chief of staff. When the spies attempted to replace God's strategy with their

8. Richard Grenier's phrase.

9. Paul A. Samuelson and William D. Nordhaus, *Economics*, 13th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), p. 837. Cited in Mark Skousen, *Economics on Trial* (Homewood, Illinois: Business One Irwin, 1991), p. 214.

own, they became rebellious. They attempted to usurp a degree of authority that did not belong to them. Rather than remaining content with gathering information useful in the implementation of God's strategy, they tried to replace that strategy. He brought judgment against them individually and against the nation that consented to their report. The 10 spies died immediately; the generation died off, one by one, over the next four decades.

Devising a strategy is not a project for a committee. A committee articulates long-term goals and rules. It then delegates authority to hired senior managers, the strategists. A strategist is wise to consult committees and people with expert knowledge, but the vision and integration required for a successful strategy are not provided by committees. Those who make up a committee are not individually responsible for the outcome of a strategy to the degree that a supreme commander is. To match personal responsibility with strategy, a society or an organization must place one person in charge. Two captains of equal rank cannot successful command a military unit. Two admirals cannot direct a ship. *The centralization of strategic authority is inevitable*. Committees can veto strategies; they cannot design them. Hierarchy is visible and legal in a military chain of command.

In a free society, wise rulers seek out counsellors who reflect the opinions of citizens and customers, who exercise control through the authority to impose sanctions: votes or money. This is what public opinion polls and market research are all about: seeking out *representative counsellors* who can serve as surrogates for the society's final counsellors, the people. In an unfree society, rulers strip the people of the authority to impose meaningful sanctions. God brings such societies under judgment. He strips economic planners of the ability to gain accurate information.[10] The citizens of such societies withhold accurate information and their productive efforts from the rulers. The familiar phrase of workers in Soviet Russia is representative: "The government pretends to pay us, and we pretend to work."

10. Ludwig von Mises, "Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth" (1920), in F. A. Hayek (ed.), *Socialist Economic Planning* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1935] 1963), ch. 3.

6

THE SKILLS OF FOREIGN TRADE

> *And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore: Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a footbreadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 2:4–6

The theocentric principle of this law is God as the sovereign Owner who allocates national lands as He sees fit.

A. Honoring Boundaries

Boundaries are associated with point three of the biblical covenant.[1] The eighth commandment—third in the list of five kingly commandments (6–10)[2]—prohibits theft.[3] Why is this law governing trade placed in the section of Deuteronomy associated with point two: hierarchy? The answer is the doctrine of representation. Covenantal boundaries are an aspect of delegated authority. The steward is under God's authority. Ownership is an aspect of stewardship. The prohibition against theft is an aspect of the hierarchical nature of ownership.

Stealing from man is representative of stealing from God. This law has to do with fear: the fear of brotherly nations. This fear could become the basis of tyranny: theft.

1. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012).
2. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), Preface.
3. *Ibid*., ch. 28.

What God commands in this passage is not hierarchy but trade. Trade is a relationship between *legal equals*: each party possesses legal authority over his property. Trade is a relationship between *economic equals*: each participant possesses what the other desires.

This land law[4] regarding Israel's wilderness wandering was based on a broader principle of justice: the prohibition against theft. Israel was told not to seek another inheritance besides the land of Canaan. Esau's land was listed as off-limits; so was Moab's (v. 9). Israel had no legal claim to any other nation's inheritance besides Canaan's. To have set their eyes on any land but Canaan would have been a violation of the tenth commandment, the command against covetousness.

God told them to buy meat and drink with money. They had been given money by the Egyptians. Israel had gained the inheritance of many of Egypt's firstborn sons, who had all perished on Passover night. Israel had been capitalized by the Egyptians, who had illegally held them in bondage. Even after the capital losses imposed by Moses after the golden calf incident (Ex. 32:20), Israelites still had money.

Money has been defined as the most marketable commodity.[5] It has the widest market of all commodities. Wherever men go, there are other men who want to exchange more specialized goods and services for money, the least specialized good. Money is the most liquid asset. This means that it can be exchanged for other valuable assets rapidly without advertising costs and with no discount.

Money is an ideal form of wealth for men on the move. It is readily transportable, easily divisible, and has a high value in relation to its volume and weight. Money was what Israel needed for a 40-year march through the wilderness. Had there been no other nations to trade with, money would have done the Israelites far less good, since men cannot eat money. But men can surely eat the things that money can buy, and there were many cultures along Israel's journey with one thing in common: a desire for more money.

B. Voluntary Trade

Because the Israelites had money, they had the option of trading with those foreigners along the way who had meat and drink for sale. In the wilderness, meat and drink were in short supply. The Israelites

4. On land laws, see Appendix J.

5. Ludwig von Mises, *The Theory of Money and Credit*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 32. The first German edition was published in 1912.

possessed money, but they could not eat their money. On the other hand, the nations they passed by had meat and drink. Pre-exodus Egypt had been the richest kingdom in the region around Sinai. Now the Israelites possessed much of the transportable wealth of Egypt. A series of mutually profitable exchanges became possible. The nations had what Israelites wanted, and vice versa.

The Israelites possessed an advantage: the nations were afraid of them (Deut. 2:4). Israel had just defeated Egypt. They had crossed the Red Sea miraculously. This was a demonstration of supernatural power that threw fear into the hearts of the Edomites. But God warned Israel not to use force to extract wealth from Edom. He told them to be peaceable people, for other nations lawfully possessed their own inheritances. There were legal boundaries around their possessions.

This made trade a major source of increased wealth for the Israelites. Israelites would give up money, which was of low value to them, in exchange for meat and drink, which were of high value to them. Giving up money for consumer goods meant the de-capitalization of Israel's distant future. But men live in the present; they must eat and drink in the present. God allowed them to make the decision: money as part of the inheritance for the next generation vs. meat and drink in the present.

Israelites were not to place their hope in money. They were also not to place their hope in military conquest, other than in or around the land of Canaan. So, with respect to portable wealth, those who gave up money for meat and drink were more present-oriented than those Israelites who refused to trade. They became spenders rather than savers. They valued the pleasures of meat and drink more than they valued their money. They knew that the next generation would conquer Canaan. At that future point, the spoils of Egypt would be rendered relatively less valuable. It was productive real estate that would then be valuable, for it would produce wealth for the whole nation.

The spoils of Egypt became the means of immediate gratification for some Israelites. The value to them of meat and drink in the present far outweighed the discounted future value of money. Money could not be invested at high rates of return by a nation wandering in the wilderness. It would not compound for entrepreneurs. The Israelites of the exodus generation knew they would not be allowed to conduct exchange with Canaanites inside the Promised Land. They were to replace the Canaanites, not enter into economic arrangements with

them. What good was money to them in the wilderness? It was either a means of buying pleasure in the present or a means of transferring an inheritance to their children. But their children had been guaranteed an inheritance in Canaan. So, why not spend money?

This raises an important issue for economic theory. Is mankind consumption-driven or production-driven? Should consumption or production be the central issue of economic theory? Virtually all humanistic schools of economic opinion say that the goal of production is consumption, either immediate consumption or consumption in the distant future. This is the doctrine of *customers' authority*.

It is my contention that *biblical economics places production, not consumption, at the center of covenant-keeping motivation*. This is because *biblical society is* ***value-adding*** *society*. To add economic value requires thrift, entrepreneurship, and improved technology. The biblical goal of production is mandatory for the extension of the kingdom of God in history. Consumption is legitimate. So is celebration. The tithe of celebration was required in Mosaic Israel (Deut. 14:22–29).[6] Nevertheless, increased production is to be the primary motivation of the covenant-keeper. *Biblical economics is* ***supply-side economics*** *in the broadest sense*. Thrift is therefore a moral obligation.

The Israelites who understood this would have restricted their consumption for the sake of adding to their children's inheritance: gold and silver. Long-term conquest requires an intergenerational transfer of wealth. Compound interest makes itself felt as time goes on. The longer the period of growth, the less dependent on the rate of growth is the investor. The covenant-keeping investor is told to think generationally. He is to provide capital in the broadest sense for his children. This capital includes future-orientation, meaning low time preference. Low time preference means a low rate of discount applied to streams of expected future income. It means low interest rates.[7]

Money was less valuable than meat and water in the value scales of some members of the exodus generation. Meat and water were less valuable to some Edomites than money. Because each participant in an exchange values what the other has more than what he has, both of them can increase their satisfaction by a voluntary exchange. God told Moses to instruct the nation that from now on, and for the next four decades, voluntary exchange would be the only lawful avenue

6. Chapter 34.

7. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1949), ch. 19.

of their wealth-generating activities with other societies. They had to learn to prosper through peaceful exchange. Violence should not become a means of increasing the nation's wealth.

This set a pattern for post-conquest relations with the nations around Israel. Israel restrained itself when it possessed what appeared to be a military advantage. Israel would not have retained an advantage, had they violated the boundaries that God had placed around the nations, but the nations did not know this. Israel had to rely on trade to get what people wanted. This must have made an impression on the nations in the region. If anyone wanted access to the wealth of Israel, he could gain it by offering an Israelite an advantage. The Israelites were ready to trade. They were not in the empire-building business. They were in the "let's make a deal" business.

This pressured all wealth-seeking Israelites to become skilled bargainers. They could not rely on military force to gain what they wanted. They had to learn self-restraint. Weak nations must do this of necessity. Strong nations are wise to do this. The example of Switzerland is over five centuries old. That nation displays a ferocious determination to defend its territory from military invasion, yet it displays complete neutrality outside its borders. It is an armed camp internally and a disarmed sales force externally. A banker defends his bank's vault. He also makes visitors welcome when they come to deposit money or borrow at rates profitable to the bank. Switzerland has become the banker for the world's central banks.[8]

C. A Matter of Positioning

Israel gained a reputation in the wilderness for trading rather than fighting. This was probably what lured Arad, Sihon, and Og into suicidal attacks on Israel just prior to the conquest of Canaan. Those powerful kings assumed that trade-seeking Israel could not defend herself. They were wrong. Israel was about to become the most battle-hardened military force in the region. But for almost four decades, Israel had positioned herself as a non-violent trading nation, a wandering people without a home base. Trading nations that gain the reputation of being unwilling to fight become vulnerable to aggressive nations that prefer conquest to trade.[9] This was not Israel's con-

8. The Bank for International Settlements is headquartered in Basle, Switzerland. This is the central banks' clearing house.

9. This is why Switzerland has had to maintain itself as an armed camp to defend its autonomy and neutrality. The Swiss avoid a reputation for softness.

dition, but it appeared to be Israel's condition immediately prior to the first battles of the conquest.

After the conquest, Israel allowed foreigners to live inside her borders. The rule of law did not discriminate against foreigners who lived inside non-Levitical walled cities. They could buy and sell homes and leave an inheritance to their children (Lev. 25:29–30). Furthermore, one law governed all traders (Ex. 12:49).[10] This was unheard of in the ancient Near East. In all other societies, the cities' gods were local. If you did not have legal access to the religious rites of these local gods, you had no legal standing. These rites excluded foreigners and women.[11] But Israel's God was a cosmic God. His transcendent authority was not dependent on geography. So, Israel became a place where all people could seek freedom from arbitrary civil government and legal protection for their property.

This positioned Israel as a trading nation. Israel welcomed traders as no other Near Eastern nation did. But this positioning had begun prior to the conquest. When Israel had no homeland, she sought no nation's wealth through conquest. Similarly, when Israel gained a homeland, she was commanded by God to seek no foreign national's wealth through oppression. In both instances, Israel gained wealth through trade. Israel extended the division of labor by abandoning force. She tempted the best and the brightest wealth-seekers from other societies to share their skills and information voluntarily through trade.

Israel for centuries was a nation located on important trade routes. With access to the Mediterranean, Israel was one of a handful of neutral trading nations that operated outside of the jurisdiction of the great land-based empires: Egyptian, Hittite, and Babylonian.[12] But a successful trade route is more than a matter of geography. It is also a matter of legal protection. From its days in the wilderness, Israel began building its reputation as a nation conducive to foreign trade. Revere wrote of the coastal trade city:

> Its main function was to guarantee neutrality. Continuity of the supply of goods was essential, since it could not be expected that traders—under

10. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch. 14.

11. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955), Book II, Chapter VIII.

12. Robert B. Revere, "'No Man's Coast': Ports of Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory,* eds. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Peterson (Chicago: Regnery, [1957] 1971), ch. 4.

> the difficult conditions of archaic long distance travel—would come to an outlying place unless they knew for certain that a safe exchange of goods was possible. The presence of a strong military power on the spot would unfailingly frighten them away. Political neutrality, guarantee of supplies, protection of the lives and property of strangers had to be assured before trade could start. A prior understanding between the corporate parties was therefore needed, usually based on regular treaties. Such an understanding, no doubt, would include facilities for disembarking, lading, portage, storage, grading of goods and the fixing of equivalencies backed by the coastal authority. Without this mechanism of the port of trade, there could be no regular trading.[13]

God's prohibition against the multiplication of horses by the king was unquestionably part of this arrangement (Deut. 17:16). The presence of a large offensive army—an army with chariots or cavalry—would send mixed signals to the land-based empires that used the coastal port cities as foreign trade centers. A safe, innocuous coastal nation was not bothered by the great empires until well into the eighth century B.C., when Assyria began its conquests.[14] The empires avoided establishing cities in the coastal areas, possibly because trading cities might have opened these closed societies to new ideas and an uncontrolled wealth. Foreigners were kept at a distance through the use of neutral coastal ports and state-authorized caravans to and from those ports.

Positioning is important in establishing a market. When men think of a particular good or service, they think of the product, company, or nation that supplies the best known (best positioned) item. Israel's positioning under God's law was as a nation where trade brought wealth to all market participants, including foreigners. Wealth flows into those nations in which property is protected and contracts are enforced impartially. God established "no trespassing" boundaries around other nations' assets as well as neighbors' assets. When it came to protecting private property, with the exceptions of rural land and the homes of Levites in Levitical cities (Lev. 25:32–33), "otherhood" in Israel was not different judicially than "brotherhood." This judicial condition is the mark of a trading nation.

Conclusion

From the beginning of their wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites knew that they were not allowed to take land from the non-Amorite

13. *Ibid.*, p. 52. Mosaic law was adamant about the evil of false weights and measures (Lev. 19:35–36; Deut. 25:13; 25:15; Prov. 11:1; Prov. 20:23).

14. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

cities in the region. Those cities were the lawful possession of others. God honored the property rights of other nations that worshipped false gods. Even though these nations were afraid of Israel, they were not to be exploited. Israel was not to take advantage of them. Instead, the Israelites were told to trade for whatever they wanted from those nations. Voluntarism rather than military strength was to be the basis of gaining ownership of other nations' goods.

This was supposed to set the pattern for Israel's future economic dealings with foreign nations. Without the threat of violence facing them, other nations would come to regard Israel as a place to do business. If they wanted to benefit from Israel's productivity, they could bargain with Israelites. Without fear of confiscation, they could bring something valuable into Israel in search of a trading partner. Their property would be protected by Israelite law and custom. *This safe haven for private property irrespective of national origin would make Israel a cross-roads for profit-seeking foreign traders*. Egyptians could seek out Israelites or Babylonians or Hittites to do business. Israel could become one of the neutral, independent, coastal nations that served the great empires as common centers of trade.

God would soon give Israel the geographical location that could make the nation a foreign trade center. But first, He imposed a law that favored foreign nations: the protection of their property. By honoring this law prior to the conquest of Canaan, Israel would mark itself as a nation where private property was safe. *Israel would become known as a trading nation rather than an aggressor nation*. This reputation would position Israel as a regional trade center, bringing income from foreign traders seeking opportunities. This was part of God's program of foreign missions through law: "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:6–8).[15]

15. Chapter 8.

7

TRANSFERRING THE INHERITANCE

Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

DEUTERONOMY 3:27–28

God was about to ordain a new leader over Israel. As Lord of the cosmos, God possesses the authority to select His representatives. Representation is point two of the biblical covenant: hierarchy/authority/representation.[1]

A. Sanctions and Inheritance

God told Moses to be a mentor to Joshua in these last days of wilderness wandering. The older man would prepare the younger to take authority over the nation. This transfer of personal authority represented the coming transfer of the inheritance to Israel. Joshua would command Israel after Moses died. Only then would the actual transfer of land take place. God was about to remove the authority of Canaan over the land. Israel's task was to enforce this transfer of ownership. This was clearly a land law. More than this: it was a one-time land law in Israel's history.[2]

Moses asked God if God would allow him to go into the Promised

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

2. On land laws, see Appendix J.

Land (v. 25). God told him not to ask for this again (v. 26). Moses had been forbidden to cross over because he had struck the rock twice with the rod in order to call forth water, after God had told him to speak to the rock but not strike it (Num. 20:8, 11–12).[3] This negative sanction against Moses was a prohibition against his participation in the inheritance. Moses had identified himself as a spiritual member of the exodus generation, a man who trusted more in signs and wonders than in the promises of God.

God's sanctions are the means of inheritance. Positive sanctions are inheritance sanctions; negative sanctions are disinheritance sanctions. The focus of sanctions, point four of the biblical covenant model, is point five: inheritance and disinheritance. Positive sanctions are given to covenant-breakers ultimately to increase the inheritance of covenant keepers. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22).[4] The **New Heaven and New Earth** are the eternal inheritance of the righteous (Rev. 21:1). *The historical model for this final transfer of inheritance is the conquest of Canaan*. The wealth created by covenant-breakers became the inheritance of covenant-keepers. "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:10–12).

Joshua inherited Moses' mantle of authority. He replaced Moses in the civil hierarchy. This transfer of authority was the judicial basis of the fourth generation's inheritance of Canaan.

B. Heirs and Inheritance

Covenant-breaking man is short of time. He has to earn a very high rate of return in order to accumulate vast wealth in one lifetime. He has to compound this wealth at rates that are abnormally high. This means that he must bear greater risks. He may lose all of his capital

3. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012), ch. 11.

4. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 41.

in a bad transaction. The second commandment states specifically that covenant-breakers exercise only a few generations of rule, while covenant-keepers extend and compound their rule for thousands of generations, i.e., permanently. "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Deut. 5:8–10).

The covenant-keeper can rest content with ordinary rates of growth, for he believes that his heirs will continue the process. The goal of the covenant-keeper is steady expansion, year by year, generation by generation. *The continuity provided by the covenant releases covenant-keepers from a frantic search for abnormally high rates of return*. If each generation is faithful in building up the inheritance, and if each generation trains up a faithful generation, the compounding process brings success. It is more important to raise up a faithful, competent, future-oriented generation than to make high rates of return for one generation, only to see the next generation renounce the faith, inherit, and squander the legacy. This breaks the covenant and dissipates the inheritance.

Compound growth becomes negative because of covenantal rebellion (Deut. 28:38–40). This thwarts the compounding process. It sets the next generation back one or more generations. The threat of covenantal forgetfulness is always before us: "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18).[5] So is the threat of negative returns: "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God" (Deut. 8:19–20).[6]

God told the exodus generation that they would not inherit. This prophecy pressured that faithless generation to consider the future of their children. Only through their children would they participate

5. Chapter 21.
6. Chapter 22.

in the inheritance. They could have participated in the conquest by transferring military leadership to their sons at the time they sent in the spies.[7] This was not what that generation wanted. Even Moses wanted to escape this negative sanction. He wanted to walk into the Promised Land as the national leader. God did not allow it. His word was unbreakable. No member of that generation would inherit personally. The inheritance of the nation of Israel would be attained through the disinheritance of the exodus generation. Because the exodus generation refused to disinherit the Canaanites, God disinherited the exodus generation. The Canaanites enjoyed an extra generation of dominion over the land.

God told Moses to encourage Joshua. Joshua would lead the nation into Canaan. He would therefore replace Moses as the nation's prophetic leader. He would command God's holy army. He needed training, even at this late date. He needed a word of blessing. Moses, as the supreme commander, was uniquely able to provide this blessing. It was like the blessing of a patriarch to his son. This time, however, the inheritance would not be a bloodline inheritance, as had been true of patriarchy. It was a judicial inheritance based on personal confession: Joshua's confession before the council of spies. Joshua, not Moses' son, was the heir of the office of national prophet.

As Moses' successor, Joshua would have to lead as Moses had. He would have to exercise courage. He was the representative agent in the conquest. He had been such a representative at the council; now he would be the senior officer. He had demonstrated courage then; he would have to demonstrate it again. Moses had recently testified to God's omnipotence, at the very end of his career. "O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?" (v. 24). It was this confession that Joshua needed to accept intellectually and internalize emotionally in his role as national leader. Through Joshua, the entire nation was duty-bound to accept it and act in terms of it. This testimony, if acted upon, would be the basis of their inheritance.

C. Courage Through Obedience

Shortly prior to his death, Moses gave this advice to Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto

7. Chapter 1.

the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it" (Deut. 31:7b). God repeated this to Joshua immediately prior to the crossing of the Jordan River:

> Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. **Be strong and of a good courage**: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, **that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law**, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. **This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein**: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (Josh. 1:1–9).

This more detailed version of Moses' instructions made it clear that the basis of Joshua's courage would be his commitment to the law of God. As the national leader, it was his task to read the law daily and meditate on it. The law was not to depart out of his mouth; that is, his words of judgment (point four) were always to be grounded in the law (point three). The basis of the inheritance (point five) would be their adherence to the law. If they ever departed from the law, they would forfeit their inheritance.

> Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand. The fruit of thy land, and all

> thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway (Deut. 28:30–33).

Courage is a product of covenantal faithfulness. Without covenantal faithfulness, courage will depart: "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see" (Deut. 28:67). Courage increases, or should increase, when men experience victories. That is, when they gain positive sanctions or, in wartime, inflict negative sanctions, they grow more confident. But if they refuse to trust God as the source of their victories, two unpleasant things can result: (1) cowardice because they do not trust God to deliver their enemies into their hands as He has in the past, and (2) defeat through overconfidence in their own power. Israel in the wilderness suffered from both afflictions: cowardice after the spies' report and overconfidence immediately thereafter, when they attacked Amalek against God's express command (Num. 13).

When God instructed Moses to build up Joshua's courage, He was telling Moses to relate the whole law to Joshua and the nation. The Book of Deuteronomy is Moses' response to God's command. The recapitulation of the law ends with Moses' final words to Joshua (Deut. 31:23). The law would serve Israel as the basis of the inheritance. Through the Mosaic law, Israel would maintain the kingdom grant from God.[8] Grace precedes the law. The promise to Abraham preceded the kingdom grant. "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:18). But Israel could not retain this grant if she violated God's law. "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:1–2).

Conclusion

The exodus generation had never been promised the inheritance. They were all disinherited at the time of the council of spies. This

8. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), Introduction, Section E.

negative sanction transferred the inheritance to their children. The parents would not enjoy the fruits of military victory. They preferred fruits without risk. They lost their inheritance.

God required courage from the next generation. They could not be risk-avoiders and also heirs. Under Joshua, they were courageous, although not enough to drive all of the Canaanites out of the land. "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day" (Josh. 15:63; cf. 17:12–13). As a result, God ceased to support them militarily. Just before his death, Joshua announced: "Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:13). This was an announcement of disinheritance, in contrast to Moses' prophecy of inheritance at the time of his death. Joshua's prophecy was fulfilled partially at the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. It was fulfilled completely in A.D. 70.

What the nation learned at the captivity was that courage and obedience are linked. *They could not maintain their courage apart from obedience*. Without courage, they would eventually surrender the inheritance. Without obedience, they would lose their courage.

8

EVANGELISM THROUGH LAW

> *Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the* LORD *my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the* LORD *our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 4:5–8

The theocentric principle undergirding this law is God as the Lawgiver. He declares His law through representatives: God > Moses > Israel > nations.

A. Unique Among the Nations

Why is this law in the section of Deuteronomy that is related to point two? What has hierarchy got to do with this? Answer: Israel was God's representative nation among all other nations. Israel was supposed to become the model nation.

Moses, as the representative of God before Israel and Israel's representation before God, here announced a principle of dominion: the power of biblical law in reducing foreigners' resistance to Israel. Israel's reputation would be elevated above that of other nations to the extent that other nations acknowledged the legitimacy of God's law, which they would do, Moses said. Israel, as the nation that was governed by biblical law, would become pre-eminent among the nations—not politically, but in terms of its moral influence. Israel's reputation would accompany individual Israelites. This reputation would confer

an advantage on the nation's foreign representatives. They would be seen as agents of the most just God. In this sense, Israel's authority was moral. It was based on God's law. Israel's authority was to be based on a hierarchy of righteousness. *Israel would represent God to the nations*.

This was a land law insofar as Israel had to obey it. It was a cross-boundary law insofar as foreign nations were required by God to acknowledge the wisdom of biblical law. Clearly, it was primarily a cross-boundary law.[1] It had to do with the universal wisdom of biblical law.

God expected foreign nations to hear of His law. How could this take place? Why should foreigners care anything about the laws governing a small nation like Israel? Normally, foreigners had little incentive to learn about the laws of a foreign nation. But two groups would pay attention: foreign traders and political representatives of foreign nations. Traders especially would pay attention, since their capital was at risk while inside the boundaries of a foreign nation. Foreigners normally had no legal standing in any nation of the ancient world, for they could not participate in the rites of the city's local gods. But in Israel, a cosmic God had announced that every foreigner had legal standing in the search for justice: "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you" (Ex. 12:49).[2] A foreigner who had been cheated by an Israelite could bring the cheater before a civil court.

Israel would become a center of trade to the extent that judges enforced God's law. This would bring foreigners into Israel, either as short-term opportunity-seekers [*nokree*] or as permanent residents [*geyr*]. The story would have spread rapidly: how property was safe in Israel, how courts treated all men the same, and how oppression of foreigners was a violation of the civil law. Such a legal order was unheard of in the ancient world.

B. Justice Is a Universal Goal

There are many definitions of justice, but rare is the nation that formally denies the legitimacy of justice. Men seek justice, often with greater fervor than they seek money. They regard justice as one of society's major goals. They want to live under a civil government that offers justice.

---

1. On these Mosaic legal categories, see Appendix J.

2. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012) Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 14.

God revealed that the nations would respect His law. They would recognize that the Mosaic law was a great legal order that reflected a great God. Israel, as God's unique national representative, would bask in the sunlight of God's justice. But how could this be if all men have fundamentally different concepts of justice? The very possibility of other nations' honoring God by acknowledging the justice of Israel's legal order points to the existence of common elements of justice that cross borders and eras. God places in the heart (conscience) of every man the work of the law—not the law itself (Heb. 8:10), but the work of the law (Rom. 2:14–15).[3] This knowledge is suppressed by covenant-breaking men in the final stages of their rebellion (Rom. 1:18–22), but it is part of every person's legacy as a human.[4] The work of the law is in every person's heart. But covenant-breakers' active suppression of this revelation is why every appeal to the authority of a universal logic or ethic is doomed. The work of the law is innate to man, but no logical system that presupposes the sovereignty of man's mind can logically come to a belief in the sovereignty of God. Thus, every attempt to invoke natural law theory as the basis of long-term social order is biblically spurious. A covenant-breaking man's knowledge of the work of the law is held innately, not logically. It is suppressed actively, not passively. His knowledge condemns him eternally, and at best allows him to prosper for a time prior to his rebellion against the truth. The positive sanctions covenantally connected to men's external conformity to the work of the law eventually undermine the ethical rebel's sense of autonomy, which in turn leads him into external rebellion, just as God's blessings on Sodom and Canaan did. Conformity to "natural law"—the work of the law in men's hearts—will bless covenant-breaking men temporarily, but in blessing them, it eventually condemns them or their heirs in history. It cannot bring them to a knowledge of the truth. We are not saved by law. Neither are societies.

Most Protestant theologians have insisted that this is the case with respect to individuals, but they have denied that this insight applies to society. Lutherans have been most forthright in this inconsistency. Luther's two-kingdoms theory rested on his theory of two radically distinct forms of law: spiritual law governing Christians and natural

3. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: [2000] 2012), ch. 4. Cf. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1965), I, pp. 74–76.

4. *Ibid*., ch. 3.

law governing societies.[5] He had no theory of Christian law for Christian societies, for his amillennial eschatology denied the possibility of a Christian society in history.

To the extent that Christians have shared Luther's eschatology and his social theory, they have adopted his ethical dualism. Every Christian theologian or social theorist who invokes natural law theory is an ethical dualist. Some are quite forthright about this; others are not. But we should recognize the covenantal confession of the ethical dualist whenever we come across it: a denial that the law-order revealed in the Mosaic law is in any way binding on societies and civil governments today. The more adamant dualists argue that Christians can live under any legal order without compromising their faith, with only one exception: biblical civil law. Every legal order is permitted except the only one which God ever commanded: biblical civil law. In the social theory of the hard-core Christian ethical dualist, all civil legal orders are equal, but one is less equal than others: biblical civil law.

Covenant-keeping men can and do depart from the proclamation of, and adherence to, biblical law. This is why Israel was warned: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut. 4:9). Covenant-breakers cannot completely suppress their knowledge of what God expects from them. It means that they refuse to obey the things that they know to be true. Their consciences become seared (I Tim. 4:2).

The power of Israel's testimony to the nations would be the fact that Israel's civil courts would not misuse their power to impose unjust decisions on foreigners. As in the case of Israel's time in the wilderness, when God restrained them from confiscating the inheritances of other nations (Deut. 2:4–6),[6] so would God's restraint of unjust judges provide a unique testimony. Foreigners who lived in fear of injustice in other nations would be able to live in peace in Israel. The power of Israel's judicial testimony would be great because it was granted freely to the weak. In Israel, the three representative groups that were singled out as deserving of special judicial scrutiny,

5. Charles Trinkaus, "The Religious Foundations of Luther's Social Views," in John H. Mundy, *et al., Essays in Medieval Life* (Cheshire, Connecticut: Biblo & Tannen, 1955), pp. 71–87.

6. Chapter 6.

lest oppression raise its head, were widows, orphans, and strangers. "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. 27:19; cf. Deut. 14:29; 24:17, 19–20).

C. Increased Trade, Increased Evangelism

When a minority group without power is protected by law, members of that group spread the word. Such were strangers in Israel. When Israelite traders came into a foreign nation whose agents traded regularly in Israel, they would probably have received special consideration from the local sellers, despite the fact that the local courts granted no special consideration to foreigners. There is a tendency for good deeds to be repaid by those who seek a continuing profitable relationship. In this sense, Israel was in a position to set the judicial agenda outside of its own borders. Its testimony to the otherwise oppressed would have strengthened God's hand, and the hand of God's agents, in nations whose representatives had been treated well in Israel.

The great empires of the first millennium B.C. did not establish jurisdiction over port cities on the coasts. They allowed these cities to operate under local jurisdictions.[7] This indicates that the rulers understood the power of foreign ideas. The major clearing center for new ideas was a port city. Here men gathered from many nations, selling many wares, and telling stories of many gods. But one God, above all others, was a threat to the sovereignty of a host nation's gods: Israel's. This God claimed a universal reign irrespective of geography. To make this claim believable, Israel was required to enforce God's law fairly and without discrimination against foreigners. All men are the same under God. His rule extends to all men.

The question arises: How important was world trade in the ancient world? The modern historian assumes cultural evolution. He assumes that modern ships alone have made world trade possible. Prior to medieval times, he assumes, trade was limited to the Mediterranean Sea, expensive and infrequent land journeys, and coastal shipping. This assumption is incorrect. World trade has brought contacts between distant cultures for millennia. Only in the second half

7. Robert B. Revere, "'No Man's Coast': Ports of Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, eds. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Peterson (Chicago: Regnery, [1957] 1971), ch. 4.

of the twentieth century has the extent of this trade become visible to a handful of specialists. The academic world dismisses the evidence because the evidence calls into question the long-held assumptions about the technological accomplishments of pre-modern societies.[8]

Conclusion

The Mosaic law was to serve Israel as a means of worldwide evangelism. Someone carved the Ten Commandments into a boulder in New Mexico in the days of Jesus or earlier. Some Israelite understood the truth of Deuteronomy's assertion that the law of God is a powerful tool of evangelism. Oppressed men respond well to civil justice.

The civil law of God was simple enough for traders and resident aliens to learn. They would know their rights before God. Their chief civil right in Israel was equality before the law. This was a unique right in the ancient world, where civil rights were tied to civil rites. Foreigners had no civil rites in the ancient city-states, so they had no civil rights. This was not so in Mosaic Israel.

One of the self-inflicted wounds of modern Christianity is Christians' denial of the continuing validity of biblical law in New Testament times. They have stripped the church of one of its premier tools of evangelism: the proclamation of universal justice. God has given them their request—a world not under God's Bible-revealed covenantal law—and has thereby brought them under the rule of covenant-breakers.

8. I survey this generally suppressed historical evidence in *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), Introduction, Section K.

9

HEAR, FEAR, AND TESTIFY

> *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the* LORD *thy God in Horeb, when the* LORD *said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 4:9–10

The theocentric basis of this law is the fear of God, who brings sanctions. This is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10).

A. A Family Inheritance

As covenantal agents of God, fathers were required to teach their sons and grandsons the law of God. The family's hierarchy was to extend Israel's national covenant into the future. This was a not a seed law in the sense of a tribal law.[1] It was an affirmation of the covenant in the life of Israel. It is a universal law that is to govern covenant-keeping fathers throughout history. Only when God is no longer to be feared does this law cease in history, "that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth."

Moses spoke these words to people who could remember the giving of the law. Through their parents' oath of allegiance to God, they had participated in the sealing of the covenant at Sinai-Horeb (Ex. 19), immediately prior to God's giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20). Moses warned them not to forget, and to tell what they had seen to their children and grandchildren.

1. On seed laws, see Appendix J.

The threat to Israel was a break in this verbal inheritance. There was a risk that their memories of this covenantal event might depart from Israel. But how? Through a failure to tell this story. The focus of this warning was not primarily individual; it was corporate. Old people remember the events of their youth even when they forget their own names. The memory spoken of here was corporate memory, i.e., the transmission of the story. If this story should ever depart out of the nation's corporate heart, it would no longer define Israel. It would no longer motivate them to fear God and obey Him.

The transmission of Israel's inheritance rested on the telling of this story. Here, Passover was not the focus; the giving of the law was. Passover was to remind them of the great deliverance from Egypt, which Moses called the iron furnace (Deut. 4:20). But the story of the giving of the law was equally important. It was not just that God had delivered them out of bondage; it was that He had also delivered to them His law. The events surrounding the covenantal meeting between God and Israel at Mt. Horeb had to be repeated to the next generation. They had heard God (v. 12). They were not eyewitnesses to God; they were earwitnesses to God. They were required to pass on this story just as they had received it: verbally.

B. Hearing Is Believing

Modern man has a phrase, "Seeing is believing." The technology of photography launched a new era. Men could at last record faithful images of what they had seen. This elevated the eye to a position of authority that it had enjoyed only in trials, where witnesses had to confirm the event. The photograph replaced one of the witnesses. But this legal authority as a witness is about to depart unless modern computer technology is reversed. The technology of digital imaging is going to make possible the altering of photographic images to such an extent that seeing will no longer be believing.[2]

The rise of modern science is generally explained in terms of the rise of experimentation. Only that which can be measured is said to be scientifically valid. The repeatability of an experiment is the source of its validity: other scientists can see the same results. But the description of these experiments is always conveyed verbally. Words must accompany the images and mathematical formulas in order for

2. The immensely popular 1994 movie, *Forrest Gump*, brought to the screen mixed images of old newsreels and a modern actor. Several of these mixed images looked real. Similar image mixing had already been used by television advertisers.

others to understand the procedures and repeat them. Never has seeing been believing except for the individual who saw. To transmit a description of what he saw to others requires more than images. It requires words. *The images confirm the words*. Images do not speak for themselves. Facts do not stand alone. Facts are never brute facts; they are always interpreted facts.[3]

This does not mean that seeing is irrelevant. I think of the scene in a Marx brothers skit where Groucho is discovered in the arms of some young woman. "What are you going to believe," he asks the intruder, "me or your own eyes?" Eyes are a valid source of information, but there is always an interaction between sight and interpretation. The persuasive power of belief and habit is usually greater than the power of sight. The Israelites saw the Red Sea open before them; then they crossed over dry land; then they saw the water close over the Pharaoh's army. Still, they soon ceased to believe that this unified event was in any way relevant for their new trials. Seeing was believing, but what Israel believed was highly restricted through their lack of faith. Seeing lasts only for a moment; then memory takes over—memory filtered by faith.

Hearing is repetitive. For those who did not see, as well as for those who saw but never learned the lesson, hearing is the dominant mode of communication.[4]

There is a strong ethical element in the Hebrew verb "to hear." The word for "hear" in Hebrew is the same as the word for "obey": *shawmah*. "As soon as they **hear** of me, they shall **obey** me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Ps. 18:44). "Now therefore, if ye will **obey** my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5). "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be **obedient**" (Ex. 24:7).[5] When God speaks, men should obey. When those in authority speak for God, the listeners should obey. This is why telling the story of the giving of the law was mandatory in Israel. The story was intended to persuade men to fear God, hear God's law, and obey what they heard.

---

3. This is a constant theme in Van Til's writings. See Cornelius Van Til, *Christian-Theistic Evidences*, vol. 6 of *In Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1978), Introduction.

4. Reading involves sight, but prior to the advent of photography, reading was mainly hearing through the eyes.

5. See also Genesis 22:18; 26:5; 27:8, 13, 43; 28:7; Exodus 15:26; 18:24.

Stories possess great authority when told by those in authority and confirmed by others in authority. The command to tell the story of the giving of the law was directed to parents and grandparents: people in authority. Children look up to their elders—literally when children are young. The awe associated with tall parents is analogous to the awe associated with God. The Israelites repeatedly expressed fear of the giants in the land; it was this that kept the exodus generation from the inheritance. They feared the children of Anak: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:33; cf. Num. 14:28). They saw other "men of great stature" (Num. 14:32).

Israel's spies had seen giants. But seeing was not to be believing. Hearing was to be believing. Joshua said: "Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!" (Deut. 9:1–2). Not only were the Israelites to hear; they were to obey. It was time to claim the inheritance. But to do this, they had to trust what they heard, not what they saw.

C. Obedience and Inheritance

The basis of maintaining the covenant's kingdom grant is obedience to the terms of the covenant. An inheritance can always be dissipated. It can shrink to a shadow of its former self when the faithful become a remnant. The captivity brought home this point. Israel forfeited the original inheritance during the exile. Most Israelites remained behind, content with life in Assyria-Babylon-Persia. Only a remnant returned to the land on a permanent basis. The others came only at Passover.

The problem with maintaining the compound growth of an original grant of capital is that growth can turn negative. This delays the conquest. The kingdom's era of expansion is replaced by an era of contraction. The problem is, when you lose half of your capital, you must double it to get even. Large losses are difficult to overcome. Growth seems almost automatic during the high-growth phase of a stock market boom. It is taken for granted. Yet a 20% per annum increase becomes exponential in just a few years. Such rates of growth cannot be sustained. The expanding capital base runs up against the

limits to growth. Those who pursue wealth-building as if such rates can be sustained for part of the economy without comparable rates of growth throughout the whole economy eventually reach environmental limits. The investor runs out of investments that enable him to reinvest his profits at 20%. The compounding process slows. To sustain such high rates of growth, men often adopt techniques of debt: leverage. The threat to debt is two-fold: (1) mass inflation, which destroys the currency unit; (2) economic contraction, which bankrupts the debtors.

Moses told them generation. They were also to teach their grandchildren. This would either constitute a double witness—parents and grandparents combined—or else it would overcome the defection of the children. The grandparent factor becomes a kind of covenantal insurance policy against a breakdown in the inheritance process.

This is why bastardy is such a threat to a society. When fathers are absent, mothers must sustain the legacy. They do not enjoy the benefits of the division of labor. This places heavy burdens on mothers and children. Mothers must earn money to support their children. They must also allocate time to teach them. The covenantal legacy is threatened by a break in continuity. Grandmothers may intervene at this point, caring for the children while mothers are at work. If the grandmothers fail in their task of transmitting the story of the covenant, the third generation is cut loose from the covenant. This is when the breakdown of inheritance begins. This also implies the breakdown of society. The inheritance is ethical and cultural. When it fades, so does social order.

This process of cultural and social disinheritance has taken place in the United States among the black population. In the early 1960s, the rate of black illegitimacy was about 25%: high. By the 1990s, it had reached the two-thirds level.[6] In the inner cities, it was above 80%.[7] The social breakdown in the black community that was predicted by Harvard professor Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1965 has taken place. Crime has escalated; welfare dependency is becoming universal among unmarried mothers.

There has been a one-generation cultural echo: black to white. The rate of illegitimacy among whites was 22% in the early 1990s—only

6. Jason DeParle, "Census Reports a Sharp Increase Among Never-Married Mothers," *New York Times* (July 14, 1993).

7. Charles Murray, "The Coming White Underclass," *Wall Street Journal* (Oct. 29, 1993).

slightly under the rate of black illegitimacy in the early 1960s.[8] By 1990, one-quarter of children in the United States were growing up without fathers. Writes Nicholas Davidson: "This is the greatest social catastrophe facing our country. It is the root of the epidemics of crime and drugs, it is deeply implicated in the decline in educational attainment, and it is largely responsible for the persistence of widespread poverty despite generous government support for the needy."[9] Some 70% of all the juveniles in United States correctional facilities grew up without fathers in the household.[10] There is no indication that this demographic process is decelerating; on the contrary, it is accelerating. Between 1983 and 1993, the birthrate for unwed mothers in the United States rose by 70%.[11]

When the covenantal legacy is lost by three successive generations, it takes a religious revival to restore it. In my day, this will have to come from outside the secular entertainment media—music, television, and movies—and the secular schools, which combined absorb almost all of the daylight hours of every child. The government-funded school systems that are universal in the West in the twentieth century divorced learning from the Bible. This replaced the Christian covenantal inheritance for the vast majority of residents in the West.

D. Restoring the Testimony

When Christian parents send their children to secular schools, they are inevitably telling their children that knowledge—useful knowledge—has nothing to do with the Bible. Yet the words of Moses convey the opposite viewpoint: *the knowledge of God's revelation in the Bible is the foundation of all useful knowledge*. The parents then have a major problem: to persuade their children regarding the moral consistency of the parents' outlook, which is pro-secular education and pro-Bible. They do this by appealing to the traditional argument of the two hermetically sealed compartments of revelation: biblical and natural. Somehow, the two are consistent, yet they are separate. But because of *the hierarchical structure of all knowledge*—from God to man—this argument cannot be sustained. Either secular presuppositions regarding cause and effect in history replace the Bible's providential view of

8. *Ibid*.
9. Nicholas Davidson, "Life Without Father," *Policy Review* (Winter 1990), p. 40.
10. Philip F. Lawler, "The New Counterculture," *Wall Street Journal* (Aug. 13, 1993).
11. Stephen A. Holmes, "Birthrate for Unwed Mothers Up 70% Since '83, Study Shows," *New York Times* (July 20, 1994).

cause and effect, or else the Bible's cosmic personalism is substituted for the cosmically impersonal universe of humanism. We cannot begin our reasoning process from the presupposition of the autonomy of nature and human thought and then logically reach the conclusion that God is totally sovereign in history. We cannot reason consistently from the god of humanism—evolving nature as interpreted by autonomous man—and end with the God of the Bible.

1. Philosophical Dualism

Philosophical dualism asserts two forms of knowledge, each based on a separate foundation, with both leading to the same truth. This presupposition has led Christian philosophy into compromises with humanism from the days of the early defenders of the faith.[12] It has culminated with the widespread support by Christians of the compulsory, tax-supported school. Christians send young children into an educational hierarchy in which the God of the Bible is either ignored or ridiculed. *This has broken the covenant of the modern church*. This substitution of covenants begins in kindergarten. It accelerates through graduate school. The American graduate school has been secular from its beginnings in the late nineteenth century.[13] The opinions of a majority of college-educated Protestant evangelicals are not significantly different from the opinions of college-educated non-Christians.[14] This is not surprising, since the colleges require all of their faculty members to have earned graduate degrees from secular universities. The professorial drift on campus into liberal humanism is disguised by a cloak of verbiage about Christian relevance in a pluralistic world. Such relevance usually is said to be available by baptizing some discarded humanistic fad.

At the end of the twentieth century, wrote David Wells, "It is only where assumptions in culture directly and obviously contradict articles of faith that most evangelicals become aroused and rise up to battle 'secular humanism'; aside from these specific matters, they tend to view culture as neutral and harmless. More than that, they often view culture as a partner amenable to being coopted in the cause of cele-

12. Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), ch. 4.

13. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), ch. 9.

14. James D. Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), chaps. 3, 5.

brating Christian truth."[15] But it has not been secular humanism that has been co-opted; it has been modern evangelicalism. "Evangelicals now stand among those who are on easiest terms with the modern world, for they have lost their capacity for dissent. The recovery of dissent is what is most needed, and the path to its recovery is the reformation of the church."[16]

Wells was speaking of upper-middle-class, well-educated men and women who are beneficiaries of humanist culture. He subsumed under his label all the pietist-fundamentalist-charismatic church growth proponents who dismiss theology as irrelevant.[17] But this categorization is misleading without extensive qualifications. Pietistic fundamentalists have generally resisted the inroads of modernism, and the six-day creationists still do in academic areas related to origins. Fundamentalists have defended Scofield's rejection of the Enlightenment ideal of inevitable progress, while rejecting both Darwinian liberalism and post-World War II evangelicalism. Bob Jones University surely has had no alliance with modernism. "We're reactionaries and proud of it!" has been the cry of millions of fundamentalists, especially prior to 1976, when some of them began to take tentative steps back into American political life, from which they had been absent as an identifiable voting bloc since 1925, the year of the Scopes "monkey" trial. Wells was also not speaking of the Christian home school movement. These people are dissenters, which is why evangelicals do not find them respectable. When parents take their children out of the public schools, they join the ranks of the dissenters, for the public schools have long served as America's only established church.[18]

There has been an implicit, unspoken alliance between Christians and right-wing Enlightenment culture since at least 1700. In the name of Sir Isaac Newton, right-wing humanists have presented their case for universal principles of knowledge, law, and culture. But this implicit alliance was not self-consciously adopted in the name of an alliance; it was believed by the Christians to be inherently Christian.[19] The fact that Newton hid his Unitarianism from his superiors at Cambridge in order to retain his teaching position only added to

15. David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth; or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 11.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

18. Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 68.

19. Cotton Mather, *The Christian Philosopher* (1721).

the confusion.[20] After Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) destroyed the foundations of this Newtonian-Christian synthesis, American fundamentalists began to distance themselves from modernism. This self-conscious distancing escalated rapidly after the Scopes anti-evolution trial in 1925,[21] and escalated again after the publication of *The Genesis Flood* in 1961. Newtonian mechanism still has its adherents in Christian scientific circles, for it is regarded as the only alternative to both evolutionary Darwinian organicism and Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty. Nevertheless, there has been a major break with modernism in the realm of creationism. This break has dismayed the neo-evangelicals, who strive to make peace with modern science at the expense of the Bible. What Wells said about evangelicals applies to the American Scientific Affiliation, a group of Trinitarian scientists who reject the six-day creation.[22] It does not apply well to the Creation Science movement.

2. State Accreditation

The restoration of Christian culture can come only from outside the existing educational system. The churches must abandon the lust for certification through secular college education, beginning with the removal of all requirements for candidates for the ministry to attend state-accredited colleges and humanist-accredited seminaries. Parent-funded Christian education, beginning at the lowest level, must steadily replace the tax-funded system of state-accredited secular education. The graduate schools will be the last to fall. This means that curriculum materials must be written which are systematically in opposition to the presuppositions of modern secularism. The Bible must be placed above conventional curriculum materials.

This keeps non-certified people from entering the professions. Academic accreditation has been the humanists' means of centralizing the curriculum of all schools, not just tax-funded schools. This system was designed by a liberal Baptist minister, Frederick Gates, and sold to his employer, oil tycoon and liberal Baptist John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who in turn persuaded the United States Congress to authorize the incorporation of the General Education Board in 1903. "It would

20. Gale E. Christenson, *In the Presence of the Creator: Isaac Newton and His Times* (New York: Free Press, 1984), ch. 10: "Heretic: Sotto Voce."

21. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), ch. 21.

22. Henry M. Morris, *A History of Modern Creationism* (San Diego, California: Master, 1984), pp. 130–44.

be difficult to overstate the value of the work the GEB did in the ensuing half century. Ironically, it seems largely forgotten today. . . . To understand the GEB, one must see it as an agency of change, one of such remarkable accomplishments that it is scarcely an exaggeration to refer to it as revolutionary."[23] One of its major accomplishments was "reforming college administration and developing professional standards for graduate education throughout the United States. . . ."[24] Furthermore, "the work was done very quietly, with great circumspection and skill, for the good reason that, like any agent of change, the GEB was up against some form of established opposition in each of its successive missions. . . ."[25] By the time it was voluntarily shut down in 1960, the year John D., Jr. died, it had expended $324 million on its many projects.[26] Some $208 million had gone into higher education.[27] (The purchasing power of the dollar in 1903 was at least 20 times greater than in 2012; it was three times greater in 1960.) But setting standards for lower-level schools was also part of the plan. The GEB was the main factor behind the creation of the public school system in the American South, through the funding of one professorship in education in every major state university in the South, and through lobbying in every state capital. From a few hundred schools in 1900, the South's public school system grew to thousands in the 1920s.[28]

3. Christian Schools

For the non-parochial school, non-immigrant-group Protestants in the United States to break with this entrenched monopoly would have seemed impossible in 1960, but since that time, the Christian school movement has grown rapidly. The deterioration of the public schools has paralleled and accelerated the exodus of Christians. These are self-reinforcing phenomena. Christian-fundamentalist curriculum materials are still highly influenced by traditional secular outlines, and none of them is at a truly high level academically, but independent Christian schools represent an advance over what existed a generation earlier. A minority of Christian parents has begun to

23. John Ensor Harr and Peter J. Johnson, *The Rockefeller Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), p. 70.

24. *Idem*.

25. *Ibid*., p. 71.

26. *Ibid*., p. 75.

27. *Ibid*., p. 79. The two main figures in distributing the funds in the early years were Jerome Greene and Abraham Flexner. *Idem*.

28. *Ibid*., p. 76.

take seriously Moses' words regarding the necessity of teaching their children the stories of the Bible. These stories, when coupled with the law of God, provide God's people with the means of conquest: the cultural compounding process. But so much covenantal capital was dissipated by Christians in the twentieth century that it will take centuries to reclaim lost ground unless a revival—very high compound growth—should begin and be sustained. In the past, revivals have not been sustained.[29]

The church must tell the Bible's story and show people how to apply it in New Covenant times. Parents must tell the story to their children. But the presumed judicial discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant has created a problem. Of what relevance to the kingdom inheritance is the giving of the law at Horeb, if there is no continuity between the Ten Commandments, the case laws of Exodus, and New Covenant historical sanctions? If there is no visible kingdom of God in history that is tied covenantally to biblical law,[30] and if there is no predictability between corporate faith and corporate sanctions,[31] then the Bible's story becomes little more than a testimony to personal moralism, if that. It loses its character as inheritance-preserving. This is the situation in the post-Puritan West. The assumption of judicial discontinuity has undermined the relevance of what had been a mandatory story.

Conclusion

Moses warned his listeners not to skip a generation. Parents were told to tell their children about the meeting between God and Israel at Mt. Horeb. God delivered the law to them at that time. Respect for the law was given added support by the testimony of parents and grandparents who had heard God speak in history.

This covenantal legacy was to be handed down verbally, generation by generation. This legacy would in turn undergird the legacy of land, which followed the giving of the law and the wilderness experience. Moses understood the threat of a break in Israel's covenantal inheritance, which above all was *an inheritance of law*. The authority of God's law was to be attested to by the testimony of the parents, who

29. See my site, www.SustainedRevival.com.

30. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

31. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 7.

could trace back their unbroken testimony to the revelation of God at Mt. Horeb. When the children heard about God from their household elders, they were to fear and obey God. Their obedience to God was to lead to the expansion of the inheritance.

10

REMOVING THE INHERITANCE

> *When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the* Lord *thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the* Lord *shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the* Lord *shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 4:25–28

This was a warning. Its theocentric basis is the second commandment: God as a jealous God.[1] He alone is to be worshipped. Moses warned of corporate sanctions to come, sanctions based on the second commandment. Moses prophesied that the people would build another golden calf to serve as their god. A calf would again serve as the nation's representative to the world of spirits and power. There is no exclusively future tense in Hebrew, but it is clear from the structure of the passage that Moses' comments were directed at a distant generation. That generation would be carried into captivity, where they would be told by their captors to worship lifeless foreign gods. The nation's punishment would fit the crime.

1. The second commandment was the second in the list of five priestly laws in the Decalogue. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), Preface.

A. The Prophet's Job

An Old Covenant prophet, as God's voice of authority (point two of the biblical covenant), set forth the law of the covenant: point three (law). Then he warned what the penalties would be if the people broke the law: point four (sanctions). Biblical negative prophecy was always ethically conditional. Sometimes these conditions were explicit. If the listeners would turn away from their covenant-breaking ways, the prophesied sanctions would not arrive. We see this in Jeremiah's warning:

> The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them (Jer. 18:1–10).

Sometimes, the ethical conditions were implicit. For example, God told Abraham that his heirs would conquer Canaan in the fourth generation after the descent into Egypt (Gen. 15:16).[2] Yet God told the third generation to invade the land. He knew that they would disobey Him, which is why He could be specific with Abraham. The prophecy was ethically conditional; God knew that the prophecy's conditions would not be met by the third generation. God also knew that the Canaanites would not repent. Thus, the promise to Abraham was historically reliable. God had predestined the fourth-generation Israelites to covenantal victory and the Canaanites to covenantal defeat. God had ordained the Canaanites to condemnation.[3] The Canaanites deserved to be annihilated. This in no way denies the fact that the prophecy regarding their defeat was conditional.

---

2. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

3. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old **ordained to this condemnation**, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4).

Moses spoke here of successive generations. The King James translators properly inserted "ye," although the Hebrew text does not include the plural pronoun. His warning was directed at the conquest generation, but it is clear that God's sanctions would come much later, to future generations that would rebel: "ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger" (v. 25). Moses spoke to those future generations through their covenantal representatives: the generation of the conquest. He could do this because he knew that his words would persevere. He had already warned this generation to tell their children and grandchildren the story of the giving of the law (vv. 9–10).[4] In order to preserve the landed inheritance, he said here, all successive generations would have to obey the terms of the covenant. That is to say, *the maintenance of the kingdom grant was conditional*. It always is. This raises the enduring theological question of the relationship between prophecy, promise, and conditions.

B. Prophecy, Promise, and Conditions

This issue of covenantal conditionality has been a favorite debating topic for hundreds of years among technically precise Calvinists, who regard themselves as covenant theologians. This debate never gets settled. Paul's words are the point of contention: his contrast between law and promise. "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:18). Covenant theologians have argued that there are unconditional promises in the Bible; otherwise, there can be no true promises and therefore no true grace in history.

Paul's contrast between law and promise seems absolute, but it really isn't. There was an unstated condition in God's promise to Abraham that neither Paul nor the theologians mention: sexual union. Putting the matter in biological terms, Paul's allegorical contrast between Sarah and Hagar was not based on the differences between the normal conception method and the virgin birth. "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise" (Gal. 4:22–23). The promise to Abraham regarding Isaac was conditional. It was biolog-

4. Chapter 9.

ically conditioned, and it was also ethically conditioned. He was not to imagine that Sarah would become the judicial equivalent of the mother of the Messiah. God's promise to Abraham was not on a par covenantally with the messianic promise of the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14), although it was analogous to it. Isaac was not Jesus. Had Abraham misinterpreted God's promise in terms of the virgin birth, he would have been ethically out of line. He would not have gone into Sarah's tent. The prophecy would not have been fulfilled. The prophecy was fulfilled because Abraham took biologically effective action at age one hundred.

Conclusion: *we must not attempt to separate historical conditions from the fulfillment of biblical prophecy*. Historical conditions are an inescapable aspect of every human action. No Calvinist argues that God sovereignly predestinates occasional events in an otherwise chance-governed world. That argument is the Arminian's intellectual burden. The Calvinist argues that God predestinates everything. The Calvinist speaks of the decree of God as providentially undergirding all that comes to pass. In short, as I have said from time to time, *God does not predestinate in a vacuum*. The fulfillment of a specific prophecy is not some imposed event that God inserts into an otherwise autonomous flow of historical events. The Arminian thinks it is, but the Arminian is wrong.

Human action is therefore inescapable in the fulfillment of every covenantal promise. Human action is always ethically conditional, for everything that men say, think, or do is under the authority and jurisdiction God's comprehensive law (Matt. 15:10–20). To argue otherwise is to adopt antinomianism: a theology of neutral, impersonal gaps in the law of God.

The antinomian's view of prophecy parallels his view of ethics. He sees the fulfillment of biblical prophecy as a *discontinuous intrusion by God* into the autonomous processes of history,[5] in much the same way that he sees the jurisdiction of God's law as sporadic and under tight boundaries. In his view, history is mostly autonomous and chance-conditioned. History is not predestined and decree-conditioned. History is not seen by the Arminian as covenantal in the sense of being the providential outcome of human action within the

5. The term "intrusion" is Meredith G. Kline's, which he applies to the Mosaic Covenant. Kline, "Intrusion and Decalogue," *Westminster Theological Journal*, XVI (1953/54); Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 154–71.

context of God's sovereignty, authority, law, sanctions, and inheritance. But for a covenant theologian to defend the total separation of promise from ethical conditionality is necessarily to adopt some form of Arminianism-antinomianism: the God of the Bible as the God of the intrusion, whether historical or judicial.

C. Invoking Covenantal Witnesses

Moses invoked heaven and earth to witness against the nation that day (Deut. 4:26). This is covenantal language. Moses was not invoking living organisms. He was not a believer in Gaia, the earth-goddess. *He was invoking a double witness*. He was putting the nation on alert: these two cosmic witnesses would stand guard, day and night, to testify against them. A double witness was required to convict someone of a capital crime. "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death" (Deut. 17:6). Heaven and earth are the limits of history; there is no place for men to commit sin that is outside of the boundaries of heaven and earth. David asked rhetorically: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Ps. 139:7–8). There is no escape from God and His word. "Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. 4:36).

God had said to Cain, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). Blood has no vocal chords. But Abel's blood was in the ground, and God saw this evidence of murder. The existence of historical evidence in the presence of an omniscient God constitutes a valid witness against lawless men. What Moses was saying was that God would see their acts of rebellion, their worship of rival gods. This evidence could not be covered up in God's cosmic court. The evidence would cry out against them. This would constitute a covenantal witness against them.

The proof of God's covenantal sovereignty is the inheritance. When Israel successfully claims this legacy on Canaan's battlefields, Moses announced, Israelites will know that God can and will enforce the terms of His covenant. The positive sanction of gaining the inheritance will testify to the reality of the negative sanction of its future revocation. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. First, He gives.

> And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever (Deut 4:37–40).

Then He takes away.

> When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell (Deut. 4:25–28).

Israel will break the covenant, Moses announced. This was a prophecy. He knew this was coming unless Israel avoided rebellion. Moses did not mention the possibility that Israel might not rebel, i.e., the conditional nature of the prophecy. The condition of covenantal faithfulness would not be met. Moses spoke generations in advance to those in the midst of rebellion. God in His mercy will not kill them all for their false worship. Instead, He will strip them of their inheritance, but only for a time. He will hear their cries for deliverance, even as He had heard their cries when they were in Egypt. He will remain faithful to His covenant with Abraham even though the nation will wander into prohibited worship. But there will be a price to pay. There will be corporate negative sanctions. The covenant would remain in force.

By *invoking heaven and earth*, Moses was making this issue a matter of *covenantal sanctions*. Covenant sanctions are predictable in the ethically conditional sense of "if…then." A prophet's task was to persuade his listeners of the predictability of these sanctions. That which identified an Old Covenant prophet was the specific nature of the predicted sanctions. With the closing of the canon of Scripture,

this office was annulled. No man's word today is lawfully elevated to the authority of the Bible. Moses, however, was the nation's premier prophet. His words became part of Scripture, which is why his warning had judicial authority down through history. In Jesus' parable of the rich man and the poor man, He has Abraham invoke Moses and the prophets. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:29–31).

It is clear that Moses did not believe that Israel would listen to his words. He knew they would eventually rebel. This passage was designed to comfort them in a time of captivity. God would deliver them out of captivity as surely as He had prophesied through Moses that He would deliver them into captivity. The promise of deliverance *out of* was as certain as the promise of deliverance *into*. Sin being what it is, bad situations are easier to get into than out of. But foretelling the future is a mark of supernatural authority, and God was telling them in advance what would take place. Israel could trust His word.

D. Removing the Inheritors

Land is not mobile; people are. The threat to Israel's landed inheritance was two-fold: (1) invasion by other nations; (2) Israel's removal from the land. Under the judges, invasion was the problem. Centuries later, removal was the threat. The greater of these threats was removal, which is the focus of this prophecy. God threatened to remove the inheritance from Israel by removing Israel from the inheritance.

Under the judges, Israel faced domination by nearby nations that forced Israel to pay tribute. These nations sought tribute, not permanent slaves. They did not seek to carry the people out of the land. Later, under Assyria and Babylon, which were building great empires, Israel was led into captivity. This was the focus of Moses' warning, almost a millennium before Babylon carried off Judah. The prophetic time perspective was long.

The greatest threat to their liberty would be their forced subordination to foreign gods. "And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell" (v. 28). To be forced to serve dead idols was a terrible prospect. But Moses knew where rebellious men's hearts are: in their earthly possessions. So, he prefaced this ultimate curse with a this-worldly

curse: captivity. They will lose their property. They will lose their military strength. This will culminate in their subordination to dead idols.

The basis of military success, David told Israel generations later, is not weaponry. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Ps. 20:7). He was merely rephrasing Moses' warning to Israel's kings not to multiply horses (Deut. 17:16).[6] Moses made it clear that their covenantal faithfulness alone would preserve their independence as a nation. This independence would someday be withdrawn.

Moses offered hope to the scattered captives. "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them" (vv. 29–31). Nevertheless, the full Mosaic covenant would never be restored to Israel. The civil covenant would be broken forever. After the remnant of Israel returned from captivity, the nation did not enjoy sustained political independence. The age of the empires had arrived. Control over Israel's politics passed from the Medo-Persians to Alexander the Great and his successors, and from them to Rome. This loss of civil authority protected the nation from idolatry. Israel never again worshipped the gods of Canaan. Those gods had been defeated twice: by Israel under Joshua (partial) and by Assyria and Babylon (total), who replaced the Israelites with imported foreigners who did not worship the local gods of Canaan. Power would no longer come from Canaan's gods under the captivity. Without power, the gods of the ancient world had no claim on men's allegiance. The gods of the ruling empire would dominate while Israel was absent from the land.

When the remnant of Israel returned, pagan gods were seen as enemies, the gods of their conquerors. Israel's leaders could not worship these alien gods and still retain the allegiance of the nation. Israel did not again turn to idols. Israel's post-exilic temptations were legalism, Greek philosophy, and Hellenic culture, not dead idols. The captivity cured them of their older bad habits.

It was one thing for foreigners to reside in Israel as conquerors before the exile. It was quite another for them to remove Israelites from

6. Chapter 42.

the land. This was the conclusion of pre-exilic idolatrous religions. Idolatrous worship in the pre-empire phase was local worship. The sovereignty of a god was manifested in his ability to extend visible rule to his people. Ancient civil theology was power religion.[7] The success of a god was tied to the success of his people militarily. This is why an invading army was less of a threat to Israel than captivity, and less of a covenantal sanction. Israel's continuing presence in the land seemingly testified to the nation's continuing covenant with God. Israel's defeat was not total. So, to break them of this idolatrous way of thinking, God told them that His covenant with them was valid irrespective of their geography. They would be carried off, yet this would not break God's authority over them or His ability to deliver them. On the contrary, their military defeat would confirm the terms of His covenant. Unlike all the other religions of their day, Moses announced, Israel's military defeat and geographical scattering would confirm them ethically as God's people.

E. Counting the Cost of Rebellion

Moses presented a real-world problem before them. Like every prophet who invoked covenant sanctions, he challenged them with a cost-benefit analysis. What was the cost of rebellion? Captivity. What was the cost of captivity? Loss of land, loss of authority, and loss of the temple.

The prophet had a difficult task of persuasion. He came before people who were confident that the sanctions would not come, either because "we're really not all that bad," or because "God's sanctions are symbolic, not historic" or because "God will not see us," or because "God is merciful," or because "we have the temple." People want to commit sin with abandon. They want cost-free sinning. They refuse to acknowledge that sin has significant costs attached.

Then there is future-orientation. Present-oriented people steeply discount the future. They apply a high discount to future costs and future benefits. They are the grasshopper in Aesop's fable of the ant and the grasshopper, a story resembling a biblical injunction: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Prov. 6:6–8).[8] Present-oriented people regard the pleasures of sin as immediate, and therefore highly

7. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 1.

8. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 12.

valuable, whereas future costs are distant, and therefore not a significant factor in decision-making today. Such an outlook is the antithesis of Moses' time perspective, for Moses was highly future-oriented. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:24–27).

The Israelites prior to the exile returned to idolatry, generation after generation. No matter what negative corporate sanctions God imposed, Israel returned to idolatry. Moses had warned a future generation of the wrath to come, but no rebellious generation read his warning with this mental reservation: "This might mean us." Like the men in Noah's day, who married and gave in marriage, and were carried away in the Flood (Matt. 24:38–39), so is every generation entrapped by sin. "I'll think about it tomorrow" is the appropriate tombstone inscription for generations of covenant-breakers.

In the Old Testament, there is only one example of national repentance prior to the imposition of negative covenant sanctions: Nineveh (Jonah 3). A king in Israel might occasionally repent representatively and thereby defer the corporate sanctions (e.g., Josiah and Hezekiah), but Jonah alone was able to see national repentance from the bottom up. The king of Nineveh repented last, not first (Jonah 3:6). It was this repentance which gained Assyria the positive corporate sanctions that transformed her into an empire, which then brought the long-prophesied negative sanction of captivity to Israel. Moses' prophecy was fulfilled because Nineveh repented long enough to build up its strength as an empire.

Moses warned the generation of the conquest about the cost of idolatry. That generation was soon to compromise with idolatry by allowing idolatrous Canaanites to remain in the land (Josh. 15:63; 17:12–13). The Book of Judges shows how God delivered Israel into the hands of idolatrous foreign nations because of Israel's idolatry. Moses' warning was not taken seriously enough to change men's behavior. Each generation imagined that the covenant's negative sanctions would be delayed indefinitely. Each generation failed to count the cost. *The debt to God kept growing, compounding so as to become unpayable*. The debt finally came due at the time of the exile:

> And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, **till there was no remedy**. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years (II Chron. 36:15–21).

Present-oriented people count temporally distant costs differently than future-oriented people do. Future-oriented people discount those costs at a far lower rate than present-oriented people do. The burden of those future costs looms greater in the mind of a future-oriented person. He pays closer attention to them. This is equally true of future blessings. The future looms larger in the thinking of a future-oriented person than in the thinking of a present-oriented person.

Israel did not respond to the threat of negative sanctions in the distant future. But it is the mark of spiritual maturity that a nation does pay attention to the distant future in making its decisions. Nineveh responded, but Jonah had prophesied a relatively short time period: 40 days (Jonah 3:4). Total judgment in 40 days caught their attention. An unspecified time period did not motivate Israel.

Conclusion

Deuteronomy 1:6–4:49 made clear to the conquest generation that God is above all other gods and all other kings: hierarchy. He has the power to deliver His people both out of bondage and into bondage. No one can stay His hand. Moses presented a detailed account of how God had delivered their fathers out of Egypt and through the wilderness. In recent days, God had delivered Sihon and Og into their hands, destroying them completely. The preliminary phase of the conquest was now completed.

Moses concluded his historical account with a warning of covenantal judgment to come. This prophesied judgment was specific: their removal from the land to a foreign nation. The moral cause would be idolatry: worship of the gods of Canaan. The resulting sanction would be their cultural subordination to foreign idols. The penalty would fit the crime. But Moses did not put a time limit on the fulfillment of this prophecy. It was open-ended. This did not reduce its threat to Israel. There were no cases of open-ended covenant lawsuits against Israel in the Bible that were not eventually prosecuted by God. The final one came in A.D. 70.

The nation did not respond in a way which indicated that they took Moses' warning seriously. The Israelites became idolatrous again and again. They did not learn their lesson under the judges. But God gave them time to change their ways. He gave them so much time that they discounted the future costs of rebellion to something approaching zero. In the face of mercy, sinners continued to sin. But eventually the bills came due.

Part 3

ETHICS/LAW/BOUNDARIES
(Deut. 5–26)

11

JUDICIAL CONTINUITY

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD *our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The* LORD *made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The* LORD *talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire.*

DEUTERONOMY 5:1–5

This passage begins the third and longest section of Deuteronomy: the law. The theocentric focus of this law is God as the Lawgiver in His capacity as the covenant-maker. The covenant's authority extends through time, generation after generation. "The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." God had appeared to Israel at Horeb almost four decades earlier, where He appeared to the nation in fire and smoke (Ex. 19:18). Sinai and Horeb are interchangeable names in this case, since it was at Horeb that the Israelites worshipped the golden calf in Moses' absence (Ps. 106:19).

A. Face to Face

Moses spoke here of the covenant that God made with them. He said that this covenant was not the covenant that God made with their fathers. God made this covenant with those still alive: face to face. Some of the listeners had been young men or children at the time of that initial covenant act (Ex. 19). But what about those who were now under age 40? Those alive at the time of Moses' second presentation

of the law had not all been alive at the first presentation of the law. What did Moses mean when he said, "The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (v. 3)? This sentence cannot be taken literally, nor was it so understood in Moses' day. How should it be taken?

To make sense of the passage, we should consider in detail another literal phrase that cannot be taken literally: *face to face*. "The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire" (v. 4). We know this cannot be taken literally because of what God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

> And he [Moses] said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen (Ex. 33:18–23).

So, we know that Moses did not speak to God face to face. Yet a few verses before this passage, we read: "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (Ex. 33:11). The key phrase here is this: *as a man speaks to his friend*. God spoke to Moses as someone bonded to Him through shared experiences and shared goals.

Not only did the Israelites not speak to God literally face to face, they avoided speaking to Moses face to face after his return from the mountain. "And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face" (Ex. 34:30–33). The glory of Moses was more than they could stand, let alone the glory of God.

Yet in the confrontation between God and Moses regarding the 10 spies' false testimony regarding Canaan, and because of the people's

willingness to stone Joshua and Caleb, Moses reminded God that He had called Israel out of bondage and had promised to deliver Canaan into their hands. Moses asked: What if God destroys the nation first? This will lead God's enemies to mock Him. "And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night" (Num. 14:14). But God was not seen face to face. What the Israelites saw was the glory cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. In this, God manifested Himself to them. This was the literal application of "face-to-face." Israel was in God's presence, as in the presence of a friend, when they were led by the glory cloud.

The reference is partially symbolic—the glory cloud—and partially ethical: the relationship between friends. Thus, whenever this ethical bond is broken by Israel through rebellion, Israel will no longer enjoy its face-to-face relationship with God. "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day. Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods" (Deut. 31:17–18). "And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith" (Deut. 32:20).

B. "Not With Our Fathers"

This phrase seems to refer to the patriarchs. Moses spoke to the nation about God's new covenant, a covenant not made with their fathers. Moses was the father of the exodus. His generation had fled Egypt. Yet he spoke here of the fathers. Such a reference points back to the generations that preceded his.

What covenant was Moses speaking about? The covenant whose stipulations are the Ten Commandments. This had been a new covenant for Israel, one which provided the general principles of law by which the nation would judge and be judged. God had made this new covenant with those alive that very day. Moses was preparing his listeners for a second reading of the Decalogue (vv. 6–21).

But what of those who had not been alive at Sinai-Horeb? They

were listening now. They would soon hear the law read to them again, though modified slightly: the justification for the sabbath, i.e., their deliverance out of Egypt (v. 15). The important factor here was *the continuity provided by the Mosaic law*. The covenant was the same because the law was the same. The covenant had been made with them at Horeb because the law had not changed. *The constancy of the Mosaic law was the judicial foundation of the continuity of the Mosaic covenant*. The act of covenant renewal which would transfer the inheritance to the next generation would be grounded in the same commandments that had grounded that original covenant at Sinai-Horeb.

The covenant had been made between God and all of the listeners because the covenant establishes continuity: God's sovereignty, His authority, His law, His oath-bound historical sanctions, and His system of inheritance. Point five—inheritance—is possible only because the covenant can be renewed through the generations. This covenant renewal system is what links the generations. The link is the covenant, not biology. *The biblical covenant is not a racial covenant; it is a confessional covenant*. It is established by oath and oath-sign, not genetics. By birth, men are automatically consigned to Adam's covenant of death. They enter God's redemptive covenant only by oath and oath-sign.

Were the patriarchs participants in God's redemptive covenant? Of course. Then why did Moses exclude them from this covenant? Because this covenant had been, and would continue to be, the historical manifestation of God's redemptive covenant for a new era. There was a new priesthood: Aaron's. There was therefore a new covenant with a new set of stipulations. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was absolute continuity of redemption; there was only partial continuity of administration. Circumcision remained; Passover was new.

God had made this new covenant with Israel. This covenant, as with the redemptive covenant in every era, included *an administrative means of succession*. The covenantal mark was still circumcision, but this mark was not sufficient. There also had to be annual covenant renewal: Passover.

The question arises: Did they actually celebrate Passover in the wilderness? The biblical texts do not say. The Book of Numbers does not provide information of events beyond the first two years until two years before the conquest.[1] Passover is not mentioned in the interim

1. R. K. Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1992), p. 431.

period. They celebrated it in the first year (Num. 9:5), prior to their rebellion against Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14). The next reference to Passover is at the end of the wilderness era, when Moses told the conquest generation the proper date for celebrating it (Num. 28:16). It appears as though they had not celebrated it in the interim.

Here is the theological problem: grace and law. The Passover was a means of grace, but it was closed to those who were not circumcised (Ex. 12:48). The conquest generation was not circumcised in the wilderness. This took place only after they had crossed into Canaan (Josh. 5:5). They immediately celebrated Passover (Josh. 5:10–12). God timed their entrance into Canaan in terms of the Passover. If Passover had been celebrated in the wilderness, either these people had been excluded or else admitted apart from the mark of the covenant. Exclusion seems unlikely. What about participation? The Old Testament is silent.

Nevertheless, we must decide, despite the absence of evidence: either there was no formal covenant renewal in the wilderness (no Passover) or there was grace shown to the conquest generation, i.e., access to Passover apart from circumcision. What do we know for sure? The parents refused to circumcise their children; they were in rebellion. It would have been consistent with this rebellion to have refused to celebrate the feasts. They had cut themselves off from the future by refusing to: (1) conquer the land themselves or (2) turn power over to their adult sons to lead them into the Promised Land.[2] They had also been unwilling to participate representatively in the conquest through faith in their sons' future victory. The mark of this unwillingness was their refusal to circumcise their sons. My conclusion: they did not celebrate Passover.

C. To Maintain the Grant

Moses introduced this third section of the Book of Deuteronomy with a call to Israel to learn, keep (guard),[3] and do the statutes. He reminded them that God had made His covenant with them. They participated in the original covenant just as if they had been there at Sinai when God appeared in the fiery cloud and gave them the com-

2. Chapter 1.

3. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to **keep** the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24); "And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's **keeper**?" (Gen. 4:9).

mandments. *Judicially, God had made the covenant with them through their legal representatives, their parents*. The covenant at Sinai was their covenant, for God would deal with them as friends, face to face. He had broken off relations with their fathers after the rebellion of the spies. Only God's promise to Abraham to deliver Canaan into Israel's hands had preserved them. Moses had pleaded on this basis in order to save the entire nation (Num. 14:13–17). On the basis of that promise, to be fulfilled soon by the fourth generation (Gen. 15:16),[4] the face-to-face relationship with Israel had been maintained. Thus, the covenant was far more their covenant than it had been for their fathers at Sinai, who had broken it repeatedly. The very uncircumcised condition of the fourth generation testified to the degree that their fathers had broken the covenant.

To maintain the covenant, Moses announced, they would have to obey God. *The continuity of God's law had not been broken*. This was what linked them to their fathers. It was also what would link their descendants to them. The inheritance was grounded in God's promise to Abraham; maintaining it would be grounded in their obedience to God.[5]

The focus of Moses' immediate concern was the conquest. He was about to recapitulate the law because a new generation had succeeded the old. *To them the Abrahamic promise applied*. The covenant was their covenant far more than it had been their fathers' covenant, for they were the heirs of the promise. They had to understand the judicial relationship between God, covenant, law, sanctions, and inheritance. To maintain the grant, they had to obey.

God granted them the inheritance, not on the basis of what they had done, but because of what He had promised. *As heirs of the promise, they were heirs of grace*. They had not earned the inheritance. It was theirs because God had promised Abraham that the fourth generation would inherit. They would have to fight to win it, but the promise was their motivation. As recipients of God's grant, they could fight in great confidence. They had already learned this in the war against Midian, in which not one Israelite warrior had died (Num. 31:49).

The land flowing with milk and honey would soon be theirs. This was grace. They would receive an infusion of capital to replace what-

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

5. James B. Jordan, *Covenant Sequence in Leviticus and Deuteronomy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), p. 9.

ever they had spent of Egypt's spoils. This capital would not just be money; it would be land. To this grant of land they would add their creativity and labor. This would in turn produce great wealth, if they continued to obey.

This means that *Israel's greatest visible capital asset was the law of God*. The law would serve them as their tool of dominion.[6] But without God's grace, God's law is incapable of delivering the goods long term. The law always condemns those who seek to use it for their own purposes. Adherence to the law produces wealth, but this wealth then becomes a snare for its owners (Deut. 8:17–18).[7] Men sin. *Without grace, men cannot fulfill the stipulations of the covenant*. Habakkuk announced this principle clearly: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). Faith in God's redemptive grace, not faith in man's creative power, is the basis of covenant blessings. Through faith, men obey; through obedience, they maintain the covenant grant.

Conclusion

God spoke through Moses to the generation of the conquest. He told them that He had made a covenant with them. God was dealing with them just as if they had been the first to make this covenant with them. *This was a new covenant which the patriarchs had not known*. It was a fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. Moses told them that God had spoken to them out of the fire at Mt. Sinai, even though many who were listening to Moses had not been born at that time. He told them that God had spoken face to face with them, even though no man had seen God's face. God had established a covenant at Sinai, and they were part of this covenant. They were about to inherit the land, fulfilling the Abrahamic promise. The continuity of both promise and law placed them inside the covenant.

To re-confirm this covenant, Moses would now read the Ten Commandments to them. First, he referred to the covenant-making event of Exodus 19: the face-to-face meeting between Israel and God at Mt. Sinai. This event was followed by Exodus 20: the giving of the Decalogue. Second, they were now going to hear the law again. This was evidence that God was still dealing with Israel on a face-to-face basis. God had not changed, and neither had the terms of His covenant,

6. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990).

7. Chapter 21.

with one exception: the reason given for the sabbath. If Israel remained faithful to the terms of this covenant, the nation would maintain the kingdom grant that was embodied in the land.

12

SABBATH AND LIBERATION

> *But the seventh day is the sabbath of the* LORD *thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the* LORD *thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the* LORD *thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 5:14–15

In the Exodus version of the fourth commandment, the theocentric focus is clearer: God made the earth in six days and rested the seventh. God as the Creator is its primary message. This version is different. It has to do with justice: masters and servants. Egypt had been unjust; therefore, God had delivered His people out of Egyptian bondage. The Exodus version is clearly a cross-boundary law. This version, however, is clearly a land law.[1] It has to do with the history of Israel. Unlike the other nine commandments, this one creates problems of interpretation based on land law vs. cross-boundary law.

A. A Nation of Former Servants

The Ten Commandments listed in Deuteronomy 5 are ethically the same that appear in Exodus 20. There is only one major variation: the reason given for the sabbath. In Exodus 20, the reason given is creational: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (v. 11). This reason

1. On land laws and cross-boundary laws, see Appendix J.

rests on something that God did. The reason given in Deuteronomy 5 rests on something that the Israelites had been. The focus of Deuteronomy 5:15 is on the Israelites' experience in Egypt. What had been their condition? They had been servants. Egyptians had ruled over them. The implication is that the Egyptians had not allowed them to rest. Deuteronomy 5:15 contrasts with Exodus 20:11, but the contrast is implicit, not explicit. Exodus 20:11 tells us what God did. Deuteronomy 5:15 implies that the Egyptians did something else.

1. A Slave's Life

The exodus generation was a generation of slaves. They had grown up under bondage. Their thinking was shaped by their lifelong condition as subordinates. They had not been allowed to make important decisions for themselves. They had been told what to do under threat of physical sanctions. When Moses had challenged Pharaoh, Pharaoh's response was to add new work requirements: to find a substitute for straw in their brick-making. That is, their punishment was additional work. Moses had asked Pharaoh to allow the people time off for worship. Pharaoh's answer was to make them work even harder, despite the fact that their production would be less efficient, economically speaking. Work had been a negative sanction in Egypt's slave society.[2]

The first case law in Exodus 21 has to do with slave marriages (vv. 2–6).[3] The second case law governs the sale of daughters as servants (vv. 8–11).[4] God caught their attention by announcing laws that were intimately connected with what their previous condition had been. They had been slaves; here were rules that protected slaves.

2. Why the Change?

The question arises: Why did God not offer in Exodus 21:11 the justification for the sabbath given in Deuteronomy 5:15? Second, why didn't He give the creational justification for the sabbath to the conquest generation? Wasn't the conquest generation more like God in His capacity as builder? Weren't they about to build a new civilization? But this is not what we find.

Moses in the first section of Deuteronomy 5 made the connection

2. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 7.
3. *Ibid.*, ch. 31.
4. *Ibid.*, ch. 32.

between the establishment of the national covenant at Sinai-Horeb and this generation. He spoke of God as having made the covenant with them personally. Here, Moses repeated the connection. Who had been servants in Egypt? Those listening to him. Yet, chronologically speaking, this was incorrect. The generation of former slaves had died off. Their slave mentality had condemned them to wander in the wilderness for four decades. Their fear of confrontation had led them into sin (Num. 14). They had not been willing to accept God's assignment of military conquest. But Moses spoke as if all of his listeners had just come out of Egypt. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm."

The continuity of the Mosaic covenant, as manifested above all in Passover, linked all successive generations of Israelites with the exodus generation. *Passover was a rite of passage: passage out of bondage*. Israel had no rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Judaism's bar mitzvah is a modern rite. The Mosaic Covenant had only two rites of passage: from the family of Adam into the family of Abraham (circumcision)—clearly a matter of adoption—and from the slave's life to the liberated man's life (Passover). Both rites were manifestations of God's grace. The first rite was a one-time event; the second was an annual event. The first rite placed a man definitively under the terms of God's covenant; the second was an act of covenant renewal. The Passover celebrated what God did immediately after the first Passover meal was eaten. The meal reminded Israelites of their slave condition. This is why they were required to eat bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8).

3. The Conquest Generation

The conquest generation did not ritually enter the family of Abraham until Gilgal, on the far side of the Jordan (Josh. 5:5). Yet they had already begun to inherit in terms of God's promise to Abraham (Num. 21).[5] Their willingness to fight was proof of their membership in Abraham's line of descent. Israel had been a family. Abraham's name had meant "father of multitudes." Israel had become a multitude in Egypt (Ex. 1:7).[6] But Israel in Egypt was not yet a nation because she was a slave. Not until Israel swore covenantal allegiance to

5. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012), ch. 12.

6. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch. 1.

God at Sinai and received the law did Israel become a nation. Prior to this corporate covenantal event, Israel had been an extended family.

Now, for the second time, Israel received the Mosaic law. The people did not have to swear allegiance. This had been done representatively once and for all by their parents in Exodus 19. Moses had already pointed back to the events of Exodus 19, in preparation for the reading of the law. He would do so again upon the completion of his reading of the law (vv. 22–33). With the reading of the law, Moses renewed the national covenant. This public event was to be repeated every seventh year after they came into the land (Deut. 31:9–13).[7]

B. The Day of Liberation

Deuteronomy 5:14 speaks of strangers in the gates. The language refers to the existence of gates. Israel in the wilderness had no gates. The gate was a judicial boundary. As with any boundary, the gate separated insiders from outsiders. Those inside the boundary were under the rule of law that governed the jurisdiction. Inside this boundary, God said, all men must be treated the same. "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you" (Ex. 12:49).[8]

The sabbath law governed everyone inside the national boundaries of Israel. This included strangers, manservants, and maidservants. It also included animals. One year in seven, it even included the land, which was to receive a year of rest (Lev. 25:4–5).[9]

By giving a new reason for the sabbath, Moses established a sympathetic link among the listeners, their deceased parents, and all the servants whom the listeners might employ in the future. The sabbath became a day of liberation for all Israel, but especially those in bond age. *The sabbath pointed to a future day of liberation*. God had worked six days and had rested on the seventh. This pointed to Israel's day of liberation at the end of her week. The bondservant was not to be required to work on the sabbath (Deut. 5:14). The conclusion is inescapable: a day of liberation would come for Israel's bond servants.

Egypt had refused to honor the sabbath with respect to servants, which was the crucial test of sabbath-keeping. The Israelites had been forced to work without a day of rest. They had also not been allowed

7. Chapter 75.

8. North, *Authority and Dominion*, ch. 14.

9. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 23.

to worship God. Moses' challenge to Pharaoh was that the people be allowed to have time off from work in order to worship God. Pharaoh understood what this meant: a direct challenge to his status as a divinity in Egypt. If he granted this time of relief from work, he would have ritually acknowledged his subordination to the God of Israel. He refused to allow this. Israel did not get her rest period until the day after Passover. *Israel's day of rest was her day of liberation*.

Egypt was condemned in God's eyes by the fact that the Egyptians did not allow their servants a day of rest. What He allowed Himself at the end of the creation week, Egypt did not allow for the slaves: a day of rest. The Egyptians had assumed that they owned all of the output of their servants. They had assumed that God owned none of this output. In short, they had assumed their autonomy from the Creator God. They had placed themselves under the bureaucratic rule of a supposed divine monarch, Pharaoh, while extending his rule over their slaves. The legal condition of the slaves reflected the Egyptians' own legal condition: servants of Pharaoh. Their servants were their judicial representatives. This is why the sabbath law singled out servants. How men treat their servants is how their superiors will treat them. *Their servants become their representatives*. This hierarchical principle of *subordinate representation* governs one's placement among the sheep or the goats at the final judgment (Matt. 25:31–46).

The sabbath law in Deuteronomy 5 warned Israel: to ignore the sabbath law is to become like the Egyptians. The evidence of how well Israelites obeyed the sabbath law would be seen in how they treated their servants. So it had been for Egypt; so it would be for Israel. *The sabbath was Israel's representative principle of liberation*. If Israel refused to honor it, the nation would again come under the negative sanction of slavery. This was why Judah went into captivity to the Babylonians. The nation had not allowed the land its sabbath rest periods (Jer. 50:34).

C. Literal Texts for Less Literal Purposes

There are discrepancies between the Exodus 20 account and the Deuteronomy 5 account. A minor one is the difference between the two versions of the law against covetousness. In the Exodus 20 account, the prohibition begins with the neighbor's property and moves to the neighbor's wife (v. 17). The reverse is the case in Deuteronomy 5:21. Similarly, the blessing attached to the fifth commandment in Exodus 20:12 was long life in the land. In Deuteronomy 5:16, the promise is

more general: "that it may go well with thee, in the land. . . ." But the discrepancy between the two justifications for the sabbath is not minor. The two accounts are totally different.

How, then, are we to interpret Moses' words? "These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me" (Deut. 5:22). If God added no more words than the words which Moses had just repeated, then what of Exodus 20:11? These surely were words in addition to Deuteronomy 5:15. If some archeologist in Israel should ever discover the fragment of the broken tablet on which the sabbath law appeared, what would it say? Would it repeat both justifications or just one? If only one should appear, then one of the written accounts of the giving of the Decalogue is incomplete. If one of the accounts is incomplete, then the words, "he added no more," cannot be taken literally.

This discrepancy cannot be a function of Moses' flagging memory. "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7). He was in the final stages of writing down the Pentateuch (Deut. 31:9). He would die within a few weeks, and possibly within a few days. The suggestion that he would not have remembered what God announced at the sealing of the national covenant, or what God wrote on the tables of the law for 40 days (Ex. 24:12, 18; Deut. 9:9), or what Moses subsequently wrote on the tables of the law for 40 days (Ex. 34:28), would be ludicrous.

Higher critics like to think that different editors revised the two passages. But what forger would have been sufficiently stupid to revise part of the Ten Commandments? The Decalogue was the heart of Israel's religion. Of all the passages in the Pentateuch to tamper with, the Decalogue would have been the last choice of a clever forger. Every torah scroll in the nation would have been different from his revision. Only at the time of the rediscovery of the law under Josiah would such a forgery have been possible (II Kings 22). But what would have been the forger's motivation? Why not just re-write the seemingly deviant passage in the rediscovered scroll to make it conform to your scribal agenda? Why change one without changing the other? Why create a visible discrepancy? The higher critic must attribute a degree of stupidity to the forger that calls into question the intelligence necessary to become a successful forger. A forger this

stupid would not have possessed the intellectual skills necessary to become a "redactor," according to the canons of higher criticism: a master of the existing biblical texts and a master of deceit.[10]

E. A Question of Covenantal Purpose

My assumption is that God did verbally announce both reasons for the sabbath at the original sealing of the national covenant, but the words on the tablets[11] included only the more general justification: the creation account. The number-one question in the Book of Exodus is this: Who is Moses' God? Answer: the God of the patriarchs (Ex. 3:15). This was what God told Moses to tell the rulers of Israel (Ex. 3:16). This answer looked back to the stories found in the first book of the Pentateuch, the book of origins. This God was the God of creation, which Moses asserted in the opening words of Genesis.

At the time of the sealing of the national covenant, the Israelites had just passed through the Red Sea. This event would have been at the forefront of concern for any nearby pagan nation that might hear of this deliverance. Who are the Israelites? Who knows? Who cares? But a God who can part the waters of the Red Sea is a God to be reckoned with. *What He did at the Red Sea pointed to His sovereignty as Creator*. The God of creation rules over nature. *A creation-based justification of the sabbath would have been understood by all nations*. The Exodus justification of the sabbath is consistent with the purpose of the book: to announce the authority of God. This authority is absolute because He is the Creator.

The Deuteronomy version applies specifically to Israel's history. Moses in Deuteronomy was announcing a link between the generation of the exodus and the generation of the conquest. This link was coven antal-judicial: the Decalogue. It was also historical. Moses in Deuteronomy was making it clear to that generation that they were the heirs of all that had taken place in Egypt, before most of them had been born. The justification for the sabbath in Deuteronomy is *historical-participatory*. This fits the covenantal goal of Deuteronomy better than Exodus' creational justification does, namely, to affirm point five of the covenant: inheritance. This is the primary theme of Deuteronomy.

---

10. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Appendix P: "The Hoax of Higher Criticism." See also North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, Appendix H: "Conspiracy, Forgery, and Higher Criticism."

11. On two sets of identical tablets, see Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), Part 2, ch. 1.

Deuteronomy 5:22 reads: "These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." The degree of literalism in Moses' words here must be judged by two things: the context of his monologue on the Decalogue and the written record in Exodus. The context here was *national covenant renewal and inheritance*. The written record in Exodus was more universal: the authority of God as Creator. Conclusion: God and Moses wrote on the tablets what we read in Exodus 20:11, not what we read in Deuteronomy 5:15.

Conclusion

The sabbath law explicitly governed the treatment of subordinates. The test of how a man honored the sabbath was how he treated his subordinates. This is true in both versions of the law.

The justification for the sabbath law in Deuteronomy 5 is different from the justification in Exodus 20. In the earlier version, *God's creation week* is used to justify the sabbath: a cross-boundary law. In the second version, *Israel's time of bondage in Egypt* is given as the reason. In the first version, God set the *positive pattern* for all superiors in history. In the second, Egyptians set the *negative pattern*. God gives men a weekly day of rest out of mercy. Israelites had to do the same for their subordinates. In both versions of the sabbath law, subordinates are the focus of concern. *How men treat subordinates reflects their obedience to God*. From God to the lowest subordinate, each ruler in the hierarchy must honor the sabbath principle of rest.

The *day of rest* is by implication the *day of liberation*. The day of rest is the model of the final liberation from bondage to sin. We labor today to enter into rest later, just as God did. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:9–11). There have been periods of liberation throughout covenant history. Israel did not remain a slave to Egypt indefinitely. This implied that no nation or people will be in servitude to any other indefinitely. This also implied that servitude will eventually end. The definitive abolitionist act occurred in Christ's ministry, when He fulfilled the jubilee laws (Luke 4:18–21).[12]

12. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 6.

With the abolition of the jubilee laws also went Israel's permanent slave laws (Lev. 25:44–46).[13]

The Hebrew sabbath was intended to relieve men from the bond age of labor once a week. By honoring the sabbath, they acknowledged publicly that they were not in bondage to the futile quest for more. The quest for more is a hard task-master. It knows no limits. The Hebrew sabbath announced: "Enough for now!" Until men are willing to believe this and act in terms of it, they remain slaves to one of two idols, either nature or history.[14] Regarding a land ruled by either of these idols, it can accurately be said, as the fearful spies said of Canaan, "The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof" (Num. 13:32b).

The New Testament's covenantal deliverance of God's people out of the Old Covenant was presented by the author of the Hebrews as an aspect of the sabbath (Heb. 4). This deliverance was achieved by Christ in His earthly work, whose efforts serve as a model for our earthly labors: "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (v. 10). Covenant-keepers enter God's rest definitively through faith in Christ: "For we which have believed do enter into rest" (v. 3a). They must strive toward this rest historically: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (v. 11). They achieve rest at the final judgment. This is in the future: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (v. 9).

Christ's entrance into the heavenly places as the high priest took place in the past. Our rest has been attained definitively and representatively through Christ. We look back in faith to His attainment of definitive rest on our behalf, even though we also look to the end of time for its final consummation. The first day of the week—the eighth day[15]—is our day of rest because of our testimony that, judicially speaking, we have already entered into our promised rest through Christ's representation.

13. North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, ch. 30.

14. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, [1983] 1993), p. 11.

15. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press [1982] 2012), ch. 6:D.

13

LAW AND SANCTIONS

> *Ye shall observe to do therefore as the* LORD *your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the* LORD *your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 5:32–33

God as the Lawgiver is the theocentric focus of this law.

A. A Cross-Boundary Law

This case law was a cross-boundary law.[1] It was not a tribal law. It was a law of national inheritance in Canaan, since it referred to the land. The question is: Was it exclusively a land law?[2] I argue that it extended beyond the boundaries of Israel, for the Mosaic law was inherently expansionist and evangelical.

Moses informed the conquest generation that God had spoken these words to him immediately after the giving of the law in Exodus 20. The phrase, "ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left," occurs repeatedly in the Pentateuch and in Joshua. The model was the march through the Red Sea: "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (Ex. 14:29). They were safe on dry land in between two mountains of water. This judicial principle also underlay the decisions of Israel's civil judges (Deut. 17:8–11) and the king: "That his heart be not lifted up above

1. On cross-boundary laws, see Appendix J.
2. On land laws, see Appendix J.

his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deut. 17:20). This principle was to become the basis of Israel's extension of dominion over other nations: "And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them" (Deut. 28:13–14).

The phrase also appears in the Book of Joshua, at the beginning of the conquest and at the end of his rule, when he transferred authority to the judges. The people told him: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:7). Decades later, he told the rulers: "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 23:6). Solomon echoed this: "Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" (Prov. 4:27).

B. Ethical Cause and Effect

The basis of long-term success in history is adherence to the laws of God. This is stated clearly in the text. Moses exhorted the nation to obey God in order to prolong their lives in the land. This was a national extension of the Decalogue's familial rule: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12). Paul pointed out that this was the first commandment to which a promise was attached (Eph. 6:2). This is a very important observation.

A promise in the Bible is always conditional. This is because a promise is always covenantal, and covenants are always ethically conditional. Calvinists speak of unconditional election, but this phrase is technically incorrect. Election from the beginning is always conditional on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in history. God imputes—unilaterally declares judicially—the perfect righteousness of Christ to individual sinners, but this perfect righteousness was not unconditional. It was conditional down to the last jot and tittle of the law.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). *All theological discussions of unconditional vs. conditional promises should begin with the life of Christ*. Anyone who argues that election is unconditional should be specific: unconditional with respect to the recipient of God's special grace, but neither historically nor judicially unconditional with respect to the life of Christ. This qualification seems obvious, but it is rarely mentioned in such arguments.

God's promise to Abraham regarding the inheritance was not made in terms of the Mosaic law. Paul wrote: "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:17–18). Yet there was a law *implicitly attached* to the Abrahamic covenant promise: the law of circumcision. The conquest generation had to be circumcised before the conquest could begin within the Jordan's boundaries (Josh. 5:5). There were conditions attached to the promise.

Paul said that the commandment's positive sanction of long life for those who honor parents was a promise. This was obviously a conditional promise. This conditional promise was explicitly part of the Mosaic law. God extended this same promise from the family to the nation when He broadened the stipulations of the covenant to the whole of the Mosaic law.

Covenant law has sanctions attached. *These sanctions are positive and negative*. These sanctions are the means of inheritance. The negative sanctions are the means of disinheritance, while the positive sanctions are the means of inheritance. Point three of the biblical covenant—ethics[3]—is inextricably connected with point four: sanctions.[4] Point five—inheritance[5]—is the result of point four. *They are a consistent, judicially unbreakable unity*. Thus, God's promise of inheritance to Abraham's heirs was inextricably bound to the stipulation of the Abrahamic covenant: circumcision. Similarly, God's promise to the Israelites regarding the maintenance of the kingdom grant was inex-

3. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

4. *Ibid*., ch. 4. North, *ibid*., ch. 4.

5. *Ibid*., ch. 5. North, *ibid*., ch. 5.

tricably bound to the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant. The Mosaic covenant's stipulations were far more comprehensive than the Abrahamic covenant's had been. "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess" (Deut. 5:33).

The Israelites were told to obey God in order to receive specific benefits. The presentation of the law was in terms of results: benefits for obedience, set-backs for disobedience. God did not present the covenant as a system of rules that was in no way connected with outcomes. On the contrary, God presented His law in terms of the wisdom of pursuing righteousness because of the benefits. "Doing well by doing good" is the very essence of biblical ethics. More specifically, doing well *in history* by doing good is biblical. Anyone who suggests that God has created an ethical system that promises only "pie in the sky bye and bye" has either not understood the biblical covenant model or else he has denied that this Old Covenant ethical system extends into the New Covenant. In the second case, he needs proof based on the New Covenant. It is not sufficient to assert such a conclusion without exegetical proof.[6] Solomon said: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1). Jesus said: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:29).[7]

C. Straight and Narrow, Deep and Wide

The road to success for Adam prior to the Fall was broad. He could do anything he wanted to without fear of loss, with one exception. For Abraham, this road was narrower. He had to circumcise the males of his household. For Moses, the road was narrower still. More things were placed off-limits. In some areas, the New Covenant is even narrower. Consider adultery. Christ moved the law from deed to thought. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28). On the other hand, the minutia of the

6. Ever since 1973, theonomists have been waiting for this proof.

7. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 40.

dietary laws have been annulled completely (Acts 10; I Cor. 8). Therefore, certain ethical limits have been tightened; ritual limits have been loosened. Mosaic land laws, seed laws, and priestly laws have been annulled.[8] But the requirements for extending the kingdom have been made far more rigorous, especially geographically.[9]

Predictable, historical, visible corporate sanctions are unbreakably attached to God's law. This is covenant theology's explanation of God's promise of the church's visible victory in history. This promise is what amillennialists and premillennialists deny; they preach the visible cultural defeat of the church in history. This is why premillennialists and amillennialists either deny covenant theology or else define it in such a way that the law's sanctions are removed. We are told that there is no possible widespread cultural victory for the church in history because of the following reasons: (1) the Mosaic law has been completely annulled; (2) the covenant's historical sanctions are no longer predictable; or (3) the promise of the church's defeat in history has replaced the promise of Israel's victory in history, at least in this dispensation. None of these theological arguments is correct.[10]

Because God's covenant is a unified system, God's law, His historical sanctions, and our inheritance are an unbreakable unity. *The inescapable reality of God's predictable sanctions in history is why it is theologically mandatory to link theonomy with postmillennialism*. Non-theonomic postmillennialism can exist without theonomy, but theonomy cannot exist without postmillennialism, assuming that we define theonomy in terms of the five points of the biblical covenant. Of course, it is quite possible to discuss all five points independently, and many Calvinists do: God's sovereignty without God's law, God's sanctions without church hierarchy, and so forth. This is the way that Reformed Baptists adhere to Calvinism: without the covenant. It is also the way that most Presbyterians adhere to Calvinism. Protestants have been doing this for centuries. But if we speak of biblical covenant theology, we must speak of an integrated system: all five points. Deuteronomy is clearly structured in terms of these five points. So is Leviticus.[11] So is the Pentateuch.[12]

---

8. Appendix J.

9. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

10. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology,* 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1992] 1997).

11. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary and Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), Introduction, Section B.

12. *Ibid.*, Preface, Section A.

Covenant theology identifies the straight and narrow path. It argues that because God is absolutely sovereign, every fact of history operates under His authority. God has given to covenant-keepers the hierarchical authority to extend His kingdom in history. They are to do this in terms of His Bible-revealed law, the tool of dominion.[13] Covenant-keepers who possess lawful, ordained authority are required to bring predictable individual sanctions in terms of God's law: specific cases. God also brings corporate sanctions in terms of His law. This is why covenant-keepers inherit progressively over time, while covenant-breakers are progressively disinherited. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22).[14]

The ethically straight and narrow path leads to widespread dominion in history. Those who remain on this path inherit the earth.

> His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (Ps. 25:13).
>
> For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9).
>
> But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps. 37:11).
>
> For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off (Ps. 37:22).[15]

D. Deuteronomy and Inheritance

The word "deuteronomy" is an English transliteration of the Greek words for *second* and *law*. Deuteronomy is the second presentation of the law. Moses read the Decalogue to the people in Deuteronomy a second time. Why? Because this was part of an act of national covenant renewal. The long-promised Abrahamic inheritance was about to be claimed by the fourth generation. Yet this generation had not been circumcised. Legally, they were outside Abraham's family covenant.

Moses' second reading of the law was a recapitulation of the events of Exodus 19 and 20, which is why Moses told that story and read that law. Because the Aaronic priesthood remained the same, this was not a new covenant with a new law. It was covenant renewal. Only

13. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990).

14. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 41.

15. Gary North, *Confidence and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Psalms* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 6.

through national covenant renewal, which involved circumcision, could this generation inherit. They were still technically outside the full covenant, Abraham's covenant of the promised inheritance. They had to go through a separate act of covenant renewal because of the rebellion of their parents in not circumcising them. Their parents had clearly broken the Abrahamic covenant. They had, judicially speaking, placed their children outside the inheritance. It was as if they said to themselves, "Since we cannot inherit, our children must not inherit, either." These were present-oriented people without a sense of dominion, without a commitment to kingdom-building.

By reading the law to the uncircumcised generation, Moses turned their minds back to the first event in *national* covenant-making: the covenant established at Sinai-Horeb (Ex. 19, 20). This reading was an act of covenantal subordination (point two).[16] This followed the first covenantal step in the conquest: the total destruction of Arad's kingdom (Num. 21:1–3), a whole burnt offering (point one).[17] Moses was preparing them for the next covenantal step: crossing the Jordan, a boundary violation signifying the conquest of Canaan (point three). Then would come the next covenantal step: circumcision, an oath sign (point four). Then would come the next covenantal step: the total destruction of Jericho, another whole burnt offering on Canaan's side of the Jordan (point one). Only then would come the full conquest: inheritance (point five).

Conclusion

The law of the covenant was Israel's tool of dominion. Israel was about to inherit, according to God's promise to Abraham. But inheriting is not the same as maintaining. To maintain the kingdom grant, Israel would have to obey God.

This passage offers a conditional promise: long life in the land as a positive sanction for obedience. God's promises are reliable. This means that His corporate historical sanctions are predictable. Predictable in terms of what standard? His Bible-revealed law. Biblical law begins with the Ten Commandments, which Moses has just read to them. It also includes case laws or application laws, which he will read to them later. The important point is that the law of the covenant and the maintenance of the Israel's kingdom grant in history were linked by the presence of God's predictable corporate sanctions.

16. Exodus is the book of the covenant (Ex. 24:7).
17. North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, ch. 1.

Paul's citation of the fifth commandment and its positive sanction of long life affirmed the continuing validity of a crucial aspect of the Mosaic covenant. He universalized this promise: from long life in the land of Canaan to long life on earth. This was not an act of covenantal annulment. It was the antithesis of covenantal annulment. This fact constitutes a major exegetical dilemma for those who oppose theonomy.

14

THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD *your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the* LORD *thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the* LORD *God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.*

DEUTERONOMY 6:1–3

The theocentric issue here is the law of God: point three of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Intergenerational Covenant-Keeping

Moses was repeating himself. The same principles of interpretation apply here as in Deuteronomy 5:32–33. Moses had just given a similar message: obey the law, enjoy long years, and have things go well for you: "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess" (Deut. 5:33).[2] He added three extra themes here: intergenerational covenant-keeping, population growth, and inherited wealth.

"Thou, and thy son, and thy son's son": this phrase reminded Moses' listeners that their ethical responsibilities did not end with them-

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

2. Chapter 13.

selves; they extended down to those who would eventually inherit. "Keep all his statutes and his commandments," Moses told them. To preserve the inheritance intact through the generations, each generation would have to bear the responsibilities associated with training up the next two generations.

This law places grandparents into the chain of family command. The grandparents have responsibilities to preserve whatever capital they have accumulated. But this capital base is more than marketable wealth. *The crucial capital asset is ethics*. Without this, marketable wealth will inevitably be dissipated. This is the message of Deuteronomy 28:15–68.

Obviously, parents have greater covenantal authority over children than grandparents do. Parents are God's mediators between God and their children. The question is: Will the grandchildren mimic their parents or their grandparents? Which representative model will be dominant? There is always the possibility that grandchildren will model themselves after their grandparents. Folk wisdom has a saying: "We make our grandparents' mistakes." Each generation sees more clearly the mistakes of the parents, and so seeks to avoid them. This leads to a kind of generation-skipping.

We saw this in the twentieth-century United States. The 1920s were years of ethical rebellion: the "roaring twenties." This was a time of economic growth, sexual experimentation, artistic creativity and degeneracy, and present-orientation. In the United States, it was a time of illegal drugs: alcohol. The 1930s followed: the Great Depression. The children of the "flappers" of the 1920s grew up in the depression years and World War II. They grew up in hard times, marched off to war, saw death on a massive scale, came home, started families, worked hard, saved their money, and enjoyed a growing prosperity without social rebellion. These children of the Great Depression bore the "flower children" who came of age in the late 1960s, a time of economic growth, sexual experimentation, artistic creativity and degeneracy, and present-orientation. The marijuana-smoking flower children had far more in common with their hip-flask grandparents than with their parents. The 1970s brought a reaction somewhat like the 1930s: economic recessions, stagnation of per capita economic growth, a glum reaction against deviant behavior, and a growing conservatism. The children of the flower children became far more like their grandparents. The nostalgia among the young for the socially conservative 1950s began in the late 1970s and escalated in the 1980s.

The point is, *there is no automatic straight-line social development*. Societies are linear only in the broadest sense. They can experience culture-shattering crises that break the covenant. When this happens, people may react the way their grandparents did when facing similar crises. There is a kind of *cultural echo effect*: grandparents to grandchildren.

There is also an *economic echo effect*. De Tocqueville observed in the 1830s that there was a rags-to-riches-to-rags phenomenon in the United States: "...I do not know a country where the love of money holds a larger place in the heart of man and where they profess a more profound scorn for the theory of the permanent equality of goods. But fortune turns there with incredible rapidity and experience teaches that it is rare to see two generations collect its favors."[3]

The responsibility of the grandparents is even greater if they live in the households of their children and have responsibilities of supervising their grandchildren. This is the case in many black[4] households in the United States today, where grandmothers raise the grandchildren while their unmarried daughters earn salaries outside the home. The breakdown of the black family since the 1940s has led to a situation where two-thirds of the children today are born illegitimate—over 80% in inner-city areas.[5] This has put enormous economic pressure on unmarried mothers and has added heavy social responsibilities on grandmothers, who are also frequently unmarried. Third-generation illegitimate children are becoming common. This has led to what appears to be irreversible poverty—irreversible without a moral transformation or an economic collapse. The liberalization and feminization of black churches and the rise of the welfare state have left black families with few moral resources, such as fathers. White illegitimacy is now in the 22% range. There appears to be a one-generation echo effect racially: from blacks to whites. In the early 1960s, black illegitimacy was about 25%, while white illegitimacy was about 5%.

3. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans., eds. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1835] 2000), I:3, p. 50.

4. When Negroes were called Negroes by Negro leaders, it made things easier for whites. But the old word was abandoned when representatives of the American black power movement of the late 1960s learned how to manipulate the white media's representatives through calculated guilt manipulation and violent rhetoric, which was exactly what TV newscasters and journalists needed to get air time—the holy grail for TV newscasters and journalists. These Marxist and secular interlopers had to come up with a new word to describe their race as part of their systematic program to replace the older generation of Christian Negro leaders, who had preached—literally—nonviolence. The black power movement was a flash in the pan, but their re-naming of Negroes has stuck. I defer to convention here.

5. Charles Murray, "The Coming White Underclass," *Wall Street Journal* (Oct. 29, 1993).

Clearly, there has been a breakdown in social values. The retreat of Christian orthodoxy in the United States, especially in non-rural areas outside the South, which began around 1890, has broken the covenant. Within a century, there were signs of breakdown everywhere: legalized pornography (late 1950s), rising crime rates (1960–80), the drug culture (late 1960s), legalized abortion (1973), a rising divorce rate (at least half of all marriages fail), rising welfare dependency, and deteriorating academic standards in the government schools—all compounded in the black inner cities. From the generation that grew up in the 1890s—the "gay nineties," in which secularism made its first major cultural gains in the United States—to the children who came of age and voted in the 1990s, it took only four generations: from my grandparents to my children. It did not take long. The broken social covenant of the "gay nineties" has produced a culture in which almost nothing remains of the ideal of Christendom.

The covenantal question is this: How long can long-term economic growth be sustained by a society that is growing ethically perverse? Is economic growth self-sustaining irrespective of moral vision? Not if the American inner city is a valid example. Economic growth is the product of certain attitudes toward the future: future-orientation, peaceful exchange, honest dealing, legitimate private ownership, minimal civil government, predictable civil government, and so on. These attitudes are becoming less common in the inner-city ghetto. These are not the attitudes of men with no fathers, no wives, poor educations, and no jobs. They are surely not the attitudes of drug addicts.

B. Population Growth

The next covenantal promise containing a positive sanction is this one: "that ye may increase mightily." This increase is numerical. Biological expansion is the product of two things: high birth rates and low death rates. A high birth rate is a covenantal promise: "There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil" (Ex. 23:26). So is a low death rate: "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Deut. 5:16).

The compound growth process is governed by what has become known as *the law of 72*. The annual rate of growth divided into the number 72 gives the period of time it takes for the population to double. A 7.2% per annum growth rate will produce a doubling in 10

years. A 10% growth rate will produce a doubling in 7.2 years. This means that a 3% per annum increase will produce a doubling in a little over 24 years. This will increase a population by a factor of 16 in a century. This is serious multiplication. Anything that multiplies by a factor of 16 in a century gets very, very large in a millennium.

Israel began with about 2.4 million people. In just two centuries, with a 3% growth rate, the population would have been 614 million people. Twenty-four years after that, it would have been over 1.2 billion—the estimated population of China today. This would have been two centuries before the Davidic kingdom. This obviously was not going to happen—not within the geographical confines of tiny Israel. But there is no doubt that once compound growth produces an upward- pointing curve, the population approaches its environmental limits very fast. With a low growth rate, it takes a long time to reach the point when the population curve turns upward, but once it does, it reaches its limit fast.

There are two limits to growth, each corresponding to one of man's two idols: physical environment and time. The corresponding idols are nature and history.[6] If any population compounds, it will usually run out of space before it runs out of time. In a world in which time is considered functionally unlimited, growth's limits are said to be environmental. Why is time considered functionally unlimited? Because any rate of growth, no matter how low, reaches its environmental limits within the confines of historical time. Cosmic evolutionary time therefore is not an environmental limit in such a world. The only question is the rate of growth in comparison to the perceived environmental limits.

With the coming of quantum physics in the late 1920s—the physics of the subatomic world—and the invention of the silicon computer chip in the 1950s, a handful of creative writers have begun to speculate about a realm that has no physical limits, a realm in which there is no law of diminishing returns.[7] Raymond Kurzweil actually preached the law of accelerating returns.[8] As proof, they point to the fact that

6. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, [1983] 1993), p. 11.

7. Most notably George Gilder: *Microcosm: The Quantum Revolution in Economics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989); *Telecosm: How Infinite Bandwidth Will Revolutionize Our World* (New York: Free Press, 2000). This book was published at the top of the tech stock bubble, which fell by 80% over the next year, taking Gilder's newsletter publishing empire with it.

8. Ray Kurzweil, "The Law of Accelerating Returns" (March 7, 2001). This is published on his website, www.kurzweilai.net.

the capacity of the computer chip has doubled every 18 to 24 months since the 1960s: "Moore's Law."[9] The doubling period is now down to one year. This is the highest decades-long growth rate of anything known in man's history.[10] Chip capacity increases so rapidly that by the time a buyer receives delivery of the fastest microcomputer on the market—delivery generally takes up to three weeks—it is likely that an equally fast microcomputer will be advertised at a lower price. But while limits to growth may not actually exist in the subatomic world—which I doubt—they surely exist in the capital markets. It costs billions of dollars to construct a new computer chip factory.[11] Until these costs cease to rise, there will still be an economic limit to the rising speed of the chips, although what that limit is, no one on earth knows.

What may apply to subatomic physics does not apply to reproduction rates. There are biological limits to growth. These limits are either environmental or chronological. *Either the population runs out of space or the world runs out of time*. When the population in question is man, analysts assume that mankind must run out of space or the things necessary for man's survival that are produced in space. Put another way, modern man assumes that time is functionally limitless. There will be no final judgment in historical time. There will only be the slow erosion of the universe as it moves over billions of years toward its own heat death: the triumph of physical entropy over life.[12] The heat death of the universe is the only temporal limit acknowledged by modern man: time runs out because there is nothing left by which time can be measured. Time's arrow freezes solid, ceasing to fly.

This leads modern man to a conclusion: mankind must reach environmental limits soon. Man's population has already turned the corner; it is on the upward slope of the exponential curve. At present population growth rates, men will approach infinity as a limit within a few centuries. So, demographers and social commentators assume that there must be a reversal of man's growth within half a century or so: war, plague, famine, or population control—either state-imposed or self-imposed.

9. First observed by Gordon Moore, co-inventor of the computer chip in the 1960s.

10. Kurzweil's article points out that computation speed per dollar for information technology doubled every three years from 1910 to about 1950. Then the doubling rate went to every two years. The doubling period keeps getting shorter.

11. Interview with Gordon Moore: Peter Leyden, "Moore's Law Repealed, Sort Of," *Wired* (May 1997). I did not discover this article until 2001. Gary North, "Moore's Law, Pareto's Law, and Greenspan's Dilemma," *Gary North's Reality Check* (Dec. 24, 2001).

12. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 2.

The covenantal question is this: How long can any population grow in the face of widespread paganism and apostasy? (Atheism is a little-shared view.) Israel did not grow. After the exile, only a handful of Israelites returned to the land. Israel from that time on was under the domination of a series of empires until Rome expelled all of them from Palestine in A.D. 135, after Bar Kochba's rebellion. It was a small, isolated nation. Nothing like the promise of Deuteronomy 6:3 took place.

The promise was conditional. It rested on ethics. Israel rebelled continually. But inherent in that promise was a covenantal possibility: the filling of the earth. That had been true since the days of Adam and Noah, both of whom were told by God to multiply. It was a little over two centuries from Noah's Flood to the birth of Abraham's father (Gen. 11:10–27). It was 430 years from God's promise to Abraham to the exodus (Gal. 3:16–17). Yet in this brief time period, the Israelites and their adopted heirs in Egypt grew to 2.4 million. There were also the other nations of the earth. If we take Genesis 11 literally, there is no question that there was enormous population growth after the Flood.[13] So, with respect to Israel in Canaan, covenant-keeping men would have run out of time before they ran out of space.

The command to multiply, coupled with the economic means of multiplication, points to the end of time. Modern man does not want to acknowledge the end of time. Thus, he is trapped in a dilemma: he must accept the limits to growth. He wants to affirm the compound growth of knowledge and wealth, yet this is impossible in a world of cosmic time. We run out of space, if nothing else. So, a few men are willing to listen to another scenario: war, plague, famine, and population control. Nature has always kept mankind in check, but ever since 1800, it hasn't. History is supposedly unbounded; so, it cannot replace nature as the imposer of limits: no final judgment. This leaves it to warring man or scientific man or sovereign nature, which will produce some man-killing bacterium or virus, to impose the inevitable negative corporate sanctions. A series of best-selling books in the mid-1990s on the potential for killer plagues testified to modern man's wondering about limits. He sees the effects of compound growth, and he knows this growth cannot go on for centuries. The question is: What will stop it?

13. Of course, there must have been many other children in each family besides those named. The text requires this because it is specific with respect to chronology.

C. Milk and Honey

Moses spoke of "the land that floweth with milk and honey."[14] This language was covenantal. It was not to be taken literally. What this covenantal language meant was that the new land would be a good place to raise cattle and bees, as well as all the other good things of rural living. Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh took this language so seriously that they gave up their claims on land across the Jordan because they found that land outside the boundaries of Israel was good for cattle. Moses granted them their request (Num. 32:33).

The language of flowing milk and honey testified to a land that would provide covenant-keeping people with the comforts of middle-class living, however defined. Solomon prayed: "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. 30:7–9).[15]

The covenantal imagery of milk and honey meant that no matter how fast Israel's population grew, there would be wealth for all. This meant that the economic limits to growth inside Israel would expand with the population. But this promise obviously had limits. Space is in fixed supply. There are always spatial limits to growth. We do not live in the quantum. What this promise clearly pointed to was *emigration out of Israel*: the extension of Israel's holy commonwealth ideal beyond the geographical confines of Palestine. This expansion would force major adjustments in such geography-based rituals as festivals held in a central city. *The very promise of population growth pointed to a new covenant with new legal requirements*.

This law promised covenant-keepers that their growth in numbers would never be threatened by the limits of their environment if they obeyed God's law. Their numbers and their wealth would grow together. There would be milk and honey for all. This promise is anti-Malthusian to the core. Malthus' suggestion in his then-anonymous *Essay on Population* (1798) that human numbers expand geometrically, while food expands only arithmetically, makes no sense biologically.

14. American parents used to sing to their children of the big rock candy mountain, where lemonade rivers flowed.

15. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 85.

Humans eat things that multiply. Why edible things cannot be cultivated to multiply faster than we do, he never said. One seed of corn produces an ear; one ear produces hundreds of seeds. Corn multiplies a lot faster than men do. William Hazlitt pointed this out in 1825, in his chapter, "Mr. Malthus," in his book, *The Spirit of the Age*. Malthus ignored this obvious criticism in the final edition of his book (1826). This arithmetic/geometry slogan remains the most famous idea in his book. It is a silly idea. It is far more powerful rhetorically than it ever was logically or has been empirically since then. It was the most significant erroneous forecast in the history of eighteenth-century social science. Only Marx's prediction of proletarian revolution rivaled it half a century later.

Modern man, beginning in the eighteenth century, has found ways of multiplying food faster than men. The price of food as a percentage of family income has been dropping steadily for over two centuries. This development is what has fuelled the increase in man's population. Economic growth—milk and honey—has more than kept pace with man's population. The poor in any industrial nation, and in most non-industrial nations, eat better today than their ancestors did two centuries ago. Even the things that we should not eat in large quantities, and which our ancestors could not afford to eat in large quantities, such as sugar, we eat because we want to and can afford to. Our ancestors had to content themselves with honey. Americans consume over a hundred pounds of sugar a year. Sugar beets, not honey bees, have made it possible for dentists to make a good, upper middle-class living. (Speaking of dentistry, what advocate of "simpler living" and a "return to nature" is prepared to go back to the pre-anesthetic dentistry of 1840?)

England's adoption of the rhetoric and ethics of free market capitalism in the eighteenth century[16] ratified the trustworthiness of Moses' covenantal promise. We live in a land flowing with milk and honey, but with very few urban flies and hardly any bee stings. Should we conclude that Israel could not have made a similar discovery? Israel failed to experience long-term per capita economic growth, not because Israel lived way back then, but because Israel was covenantally unfaithful.

16. Deirdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

D. The Wealth Formula

Moses set forth a conditional promise: population growth and per capita economic growth in exchange for corporate covenantal obedience. Had Israelites conformed to the terms of the covenant, Israel would have experienced the same kind of compound growth that the West has enjoyed since the mid-eighteenth century.

Wealth is so widespread today that we fail to recognize the magnitude of what the West has experienced over the last two centuries. The economic condition of the average Englishman in 1750 was far closer to the economic condition of the average Israelite in Joshua's day than it was to the average Westerner today. Travel was just about as slow. The cost of travel was just about as high. Metallurgy was superior, but medicine probably was not. The physical pain of life's disasters was no different. A fire could wipe out a family's wealth just as completely in 1750 A.D. as in 1400 B.C. Mortality rates for children were high in England. We do not know what they were in Israel. Communications were much better in England because of the printing press. For the wealthy and well educated, life was substantially advanced beyond Joshua's day—more sophisticated toys—but for the average farmer, it was not much different. For the average English coal miner, it was worse. On the whole, the typical Israelite would have recognized the life style of England in 1750 as being marginally more productive than Israel's, but probably not worth suffering the English climate (and surely not English cooking).

Had he visited any modern industrial nation, he would have recognized this world as beyond the dreams of kings. Ours is a radically different world economically from 1750. The difference is not in raw materials. Those have not changed. The "limits to growth" doom-sayers might even argue there are fewer resources today. The difference is in science, technology, and rates of capital formation. But how did these changes come about? Through changes in economic organization. The chief difference is in the power of the institutions of capitalism to draw forth productive ideas from millions of people and then supply entrepreneurs with the capital required to transform a small percentage of these ideas into customer-satisfying output.[17] The difference, in short, is in the division of labor, just as Adam Smith wrote in 1776. The structure of production of the pin factory in chapter 1 of *Wealth of Nations* has been imitated around the world, and its output

17. John Jewkes, David Sawyers, and Richard Stillerman, *The Sources of Invention,* 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1969).

had multiplied 500-fold by the final decade of the twentieth century. But how could this have been accomplished? By improving industrial output on average by a little under three percent per annum since 1776.[18] From about 1870 until the 1990s, the annual economic growth rate in the United States was 3.25%.[19] What is a barely measurable improvement in one factory's production on an annual basis becomes a world-transforming miracle in a little over two centuries, i.e., the amount of time from the death of Moses to the beginning of Gideon's judgeship. Putting it differently, this would have been from Moses' death to the birth of David's grandfather's grandfather's father. The West, beginning with Great Britain, found a way to sustain compound economic growth of somewhat under three percent per annum despite wars and revolutions. This discovery has changed the world.

Who is to say that a society that honored the Mosaic law could not have done the same? Who is to say that compound economic growth could not have begun fourteen centuries before the death of Jesus Christ rather than seventeen centuries after? The Mosaic law makes it plain that such economic growth was not only possible, it was morally mandatory.

Conclusion

Moses delivered to Israel the judicial foundation of long-term economic growth. Through God's grace, the nation could adhere to the Mosaic law. This would have produced the growth in population and per capita wealth promised by Moses. But God, in His sovereignty, did not predestine Israel to obey. The growth opportunity was lost. But this does not mean that the potential for enormous long-term growth was not available to Israel.

Had Israel continued to grow as fast as the world's population has grown since 1776, the filling of the earth would have been completed millennia ago. But it was not God's time. The rate of population growth will vary until such time as God has determined that time must end. We will run out of time before we run out of raw materials,

18. Walt W. Rostow estimated the average annual increase of world industrial production as 2.84% per year. Rostow, *The World Economy: History & Prospect* (Austin: University of Texas, 1978), p. 48. Such a precise figure is spurious. The incomplete documentary evidence and the difficulty of comparing rates of growth in different periods and nations make such statistics little more than informed guesses. But "less than three percent" seems like a reasonable guess until someone can prove that this guess is extremely high or extremely low.

19. Milton Friedman, "Getting Back to Real Growth," *Wall Street Journal* (Aug. 1, 1995).

space, and productive new ideas. *Time, not nature, is the crucial limit to growth*.

Modern man in his heart fears the idol of history more than he fears the idol of nature, so he has invented a mythology—uniformitarianism—which comforts him by assuring him that mankind has all the time in the world. "There's plenty more where that came from!" Billions of years have passed, we are assured, so billions must lie ahead. "No final judgment anytime soon!" Modern man then pretends to fear nature: the resource limits to growth. He invents whole philosophies to deal with nature and nature's limits.[20] He whistles past the cosmic graveyard, telling himself that mankind will run out of resources before we run out of time. He forgets Moses' words: *fear God, not nature*. It is the fixed supply of time, not the far less fixed supply of raw materials, which threatens every covenant-breaking man and covenant-breaking mankind as a whole. Time is the only irreplaceable resource, and it is in short supply. Nothing points this out to man more effectively than the multiplication of man. God's dominion command (Gen. 1:28; 9:1), when obeyed, forces men to hear the ticking of the prophetic clock. Either we must lower the rate of population growth to zero or less,[21] or face judgment: at the hand of God or the hand of the idol of nature. Covenant-breaking man prefers to deal with the idol of nature, with whom he believes he can work out a peace treaty on terms satisfying to man.

20. North, *Is the World Running Down?*

21. This will begin in the second half of the twenty-first century, if current demographic trends continue: Ben. J. Wattenberg, *Fewer: How the New Demography of Depopulation Will Shape Our Future* (Chicago: Dee, 2004); Philip Longman, *The Empty Cradle* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

15

LAW AND INHERITANCE

> *Hear, O Israel: The* Lord *our God is one* Lord*: And thou shalt love the* Lord *thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 6:4–9

The theocentric principle here is God as the Lawgiver.

A. Obedience and Inheritance

This passage begins with what have become the most famous words of Judaism, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord," called the *shawmah Israel*, or "hear, Israel." In Hebrew, the word for "hear" is the word for "obey": *shawmah*. The passage then adds what became some of the most famous words of Jesus: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (v. 5).[1] Moses then told the nation that these words must become central to the nation, with each father teaching them to his son from morning to night (v. 7). The theocentric focus of this law is obvious: God as the one and only God.

The phrase "morning to night" indicates the comprehensive authority of biblical law. All day long, the law of God applies to the affairs of men. Fathers were to spend time with their sons, either in the

1. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30).

fields or in the family business. Sons were to receive knowledge of the law in the context of profitable labor. The familiar phrase, "learning by doing," was applicable. It was a system of instruction we might call "learning while doing." The law was not some abstract legal code. It was an integrated system of rules that was supposed to be taught in the context of daily living. God's Bible-revealed law was not to become peripheral in the lives of God's covenant people. It was to be central. It was to govern men's activities throughout the day. It was to be memorized, discussed, and acted upon by young and old. Fathers were not to tell their sons, "Do as I say, not as I do." Their lives were to become consistent with their words. The sons would hear God's law and see their fathers carrying it out. This law mandated a mastery of the details of biblical law to all those who were covenanted to Him.

All of this has been lost to modern man. Today, formal education is not Bible-based, family-based, occupation-based, or personal. It is humanism-based, state-based, abstract, and bureaucratic. It is also intensely feminine in the early years.

B. The Biblical Covenant Model

The entire passage, Deuteronomy 6:4–15, constitutes a single covenantal command. The structure of this passage parallels the biblical covenant: all five points.[2] Point one, transcendence/presence, is summarized by the opening: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." This God is the Creator God of the patriarchs. He is not some local deity. He speaks with a unified voice. He speaks to men clearly in the midst of history.

Point two, hierarchy/authority, is seen in the command to love Him, and not just love Him, but love Him with everything man has at his disposal: heart, soul, and strength. Men must place their lives at God's disposal, doing in love whatever He commands.

Point three, ethics/boundaries, is found in the command to place God's words or commandments at the center of our lives. Men must teach these laws to their children down through the generations. Biblical law is to become the framework of interpretation of every person's life, governing what he does and says from morning to night. Even the boundaries of a man's house were supposed to be marked by the presence of the written law.

2. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992). Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010).

Point four, oath/sanctions, appears in the next section of the passage. God promises to deliver the wealth of the Canaanites into the hands of the Israelites. For the Canaanites, this will constitute negative sanctions. For Israel, it will constitute positive sanctions.

> And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (vv. 10–12).

The Israelites were told to fear God because of this, and to swear their oaths by His name: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name" (v. 13).

Point five, succession/inheritance, is found in the covenantal threat of disinheritance: "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth" (vv. 14–15).

This passage later became the legal basis for the covenant lawsuits brought by the prophets against Israel. Here, in one brief passage, we find the outline of God's covenantal dealings with Israel until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. As a geographically based nation, Israel was removed twice from the land: at the captivity and at the diaspora under Rome. They were scattered across the face of the earth. But, as a people, they were not destroyed from the face of the earth. After their return from the exile, Jews did not again pursue the gods around them. After the diaspora under Rome, they remained an identifiable people.

A problem today is the growing sophistication of covenant-breakers. The gods of Canaan did not reappear in history. Other gods did. They have offered power and influence—positive sanctions—to those who are willing to worship them. Such worship has become progressively more intellectual and moral than liturgical, more a matter of replacing biblical laws with other laws. Rather than teaching sons the law of God, men have turned over their sons to be trained by certified educators who are more far familiar with rhetoric than law.

C. Teaching the Next Generation

The passage following this one instructs covenant-keepers to instruct their children in the law of God. Parents are warned that children will ask questions about the meaning of God's law. "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?" (Deut. 6:20). We might expect the required answer to be related to the person of God, holiness of God, or some other lofty speculation. Not so. The answer is to be tied to the corporate blessings of God in history.

> Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us (vv. 21–25).

God had delivered them from bondage. He had imposed negative sanctions on Pharaoh and his household. He had brought them into the Promised Land. This was the fulfillment of a promise to the patriarchs. God commanded Israel to obey Him, "for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day." That is, God has established a cause-and-effect relationship in history between covenant-keeping and corporate blessings. The basis of Israel's preservation of its inheritance in the land was covenantal obedience to the specific terms of God's revealed law. The children of Israelites were to be instructed in two things: the history of Israel and the law of God. They were to be told that these two courses of study are covenantally related. The basis of the relationship between history and law is point four of the biblical covenant model: sanctions.

A mark of rebellion against God's covenant is the denial of this fixed relationship. *To study history apart from God's law is to lay the foundation for national disinheritance*. If the events of history have nothing predictable to do with God's law, then history becomes the product of forces other than God and His covenant. God's law then becomes, at best, a guide for personal ethics, a guide that cannot definitively be shown to advance the careers of those who adhere to it.

It is basic to modern Christian theology to deny that such a corpo-

rate cause-and-effect relationship exists in New Testament times. If it did exist, then Christians would be compelled to preach, teach, and obey biblical law if they want to prosper. This thought is anathema to modern theologians, so they deny that success in history has anything to do with God's law as revealed in the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Calvinist Meredith G. Kline wrote that ethical cause and effect in history are, humanly speaking, random. "And meanwhile it [the common grace order] must run its course within the uncertainties of the mutually conditioning principles of common grace and common curse, prosperity and adversity being experienced in a manner largely unpredictable because of the inscrutable sovereignty of the divine will that dispenses them in mysterious ways."[3]

If most Christians had ever heard about Kline's argument, which they haven't, they would regard it as too radical. You have to be trained for years in seminary in order to believe anything as ethically antinomian and as culturally futile as Kline's position. Christians find it difficult to teach their children that obedience to God produces random results in history, whether corporately or personally. So, they search for common-ground ethical principles of individual action, hopefully shared by all honest men, that will reintroduce ethics into the discussion of historical cause and effect, but without any invocation of the Bible and God's predictable sanctions, which would reintroduce the embarrassing issue of biblical law. They are apt to cite Benjamin Franklin's famous eighteenth-century motto in *Poor Richard's Almanack*, "Honesty is the best policy." This is a statement of personal faith rather than a developed social theory. This declaration is devoid of biblical covenantal content because: (1) the definition of honesty is not tied to the Bible; (2) the definition of "best" is not tied to the Bible. It was Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* that first introduced a comprehensive common-ground theory to justify the link that Franklin's aphorism set forth. Smith argued that honesty will generate income on a free market, which was what Franklin was arguing. Smith developed the idea in detail.

There is a practical problem with Franklin's motto. With no explicit biblical laws to adhere to, no God-invoked historical sanctions to undergird it, and no common definition of "best policy," this common-ground humanist faith can lead to a morally questionable career, such as Franklin's. He hired men to serve under him who he knew

3. Meredith G. Kline, "Comments on an Old-New Error," *Westminster Theological Journal*, XLI (Fall 1978), p. 184.

were British spies, most notably Edward Bancroft, during his term of service as an ambassador to France during the American Revolution. He refused to tighten security in the Paris office, despite continual warnings to do so. He met secretly with Paul Wentworth, the head of Britain's agents in France. He was known to the British secret service as "72" and "our leading man." Franklin's biographer Cecil Currey concluded: "Benjamin Franklin wanted to win the American Revolution. No matter who lost—the United States, France, England—Benjamin Franklin wanted to win. In some ways he did. His honor remained intact. He gained new renown. He was rewarded by a grateful nation with additional positions of public responsibility. His secrets generally remained hidden."[4] In Franklin's case, dishonesty was the best policy during his career in France. If America lost, he would survive as a covert friend of Britain; if America won, nobody would believe his duplicity other than his political enemy John Adams and his fellow ambassador in Paris, Arthur Lee, both of whom suspected him. He got away with it. (Two professional historians have written on Franklin's status as a possible double agent and ally of British spies. One did so anonymously and did not go into teaching;[5] the other saw his book consigned to what he later called "historical limbo."[6])

The problem is, those who say they are God's chosen people have been hesitant to teach their children that God commands obedience and imposes sanctions in history in terms of this obedience. They have tried to find alternatives to such a revelationally grounded concept of historical cause and effect. They have sought broader ethical principles that have been sanctioned by covenant-breakers. In short, they have substituted new laws for old and new sanctions for old, which ultimately implies new gods for old.

D. New Gods for Old

Consider post-exilic Israel. The experience of the exile broke Israel's habit of worshipping the idols of the land of Canaan. But the people

4. Cecil Currey, "The Franklin Legend," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Summer 1976), p. 143.

5. The anonymous author of *1789*, distributed by the John Birch Society. He later worked on the staff of a famous conservative United States Senator.

6. Currey, "Franklin Legend," p. 150. See also Currey, *Code Number 72: Ben Franklin: Patriot or Spy?* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972). His previous book on Franklin was *Road to Revolution: Benjamin Franklin in England, 1765–1775* (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1968). The earlier book was favorably received by historians. It was not controversial. It was not memorable. It was safe.

continued to substitute new gods for old. In the name of the God of the Bible, they worshipped more subtle gods than those represented by physical idols. Greek philosophy and literature became a snare for a minority of well-connected Jews during the three centuries before the birth of Jesus. This was Judaic Hellenism. But the Jews' commitment to cosmopolitan Hellenism did not overcome their commitment to a proto-Talmudic law.[7]

The idols of ancient paganism were deaf, dumb, and blind (II Kings 19:17–18; Dan. 5:23). They judicially represented demonic forces whose offer of power and wealth was limited to geographical regions. They were not universal gods. To sustain an empire, a ruler had to destroy the authority of local gods by destroying their temples and their cities' walls or by removing the people from their walled city-states. The smashing of a city's walls represented the destruction of its gods, as the fall of Jericho indicated. Jericho was Israel's model: total destruction. But this was a one-time event. For the inheritance to survive, Israel could not repeat this act of total devastation. Instead, Israel was commanded to commit genocide or remove from the nation all of the inhabitants of Canaan's cities. This was why God allowed Israel to leave the cities' walls intact: the removal of the former residents was sufficient. But this complete removal was also covenantally necessary: should any of them remain in the land, they would lead the Israelites into false worship (Deut. 7:1–5).

After the exile, the Jews faced a new problem: *syncretism*. The religion of the empires was a religion of cooperating gods. The heart of this religion was politics. The political order replaced the priestly order. The various priesthoods became functionaries of the state. Their task was to secure the favor of all of the gods of the conquered cities. Today, we call this religion *pluralism*.[8] While the modern world's version of syncretism is not openly idolatrous, the result is the same: the substitution of political salvation in history for the rule of local gods.[9]

E. Covenant-Keeping and Worldly Success

Deuteronomy 4 identifies covenantal faithfulness as the basis of continued dominion in the Promised Land. The sanction of removal from the land is clearly a negative sanction, a divine punishment. The

7. Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, [1974] 1981), I, p. 313.

8. See Appendix H: "Week Reed: The Politics of Compromise."

9. See Appendix C: "Syncretism, Pluralism, and Empire."

implication is that covenantal faithfulness brings positive sanctions: economic success. We read in Deuteronomy 8 that compound economic growth is a public testimony to the cause-and-effect relationship between man's covenantal faithfulness and God's positive sanctions in history. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18).[10]

The problem is that the positive sanctions can lead to covenantal rebellion: "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17). The blessing of God can become the basis of covenant-breaking man's belief in the autonomy of man. The blessing becomes a snare.

The gods of modernism are the gods of man's pretended autonomy. They are the product of mankind's success. The gods of modernism are secularized versions of covenantal truths. Does number really rule the world? No, but God in His wisdom created a world in which some of the numerical inter-relationships discoverable through man's mind are found to govern some of the operations of nature, thereby making science possible. Is compound economic growth really possible? Yes, for a time, when men honor God's law, especially God's laws restricting the claims of the state on the wealth of men (I Sam. 8:15, 17).[11] But time will run out—something that compound growth in a finite world points to. Is science a tool of dominion? Yes, but not when scientists adopt theories of origin and providence that place impersonal randomness and unbreakable law on the dialectical throne of an autonomous universe.

The legitimate goal of success in history is to be attained by the means of grace. The covenantal faithfulness of God's people leads to success. Success can be sustained, however, only by continuing covenantal faithfulness. When men believe they have discovered the secret of compound growth apart from the law of God, they have said in their heart that the power of man's mind in guiding his hand is the source of our wealth. This confession of faith is the essence of modernism. It is the mark of apostasy. A world built in terms of such a confession cannot be sustained long term.

10. Chapter 22.

11. Gary North, *Disobedience and Defeat: An Economic Commentary on the Historical Books* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 14.

F. The Feminization of Young Child Education

One of the monumental and as yet unsolved problems of modern society is that women teach boys: either mothers or female school teachers. The context of teaching today is the classroom or home, not the work place. This means that education for males has moved away from the father-son apprenticeship model, which was clearly the Mosaic norm, to the classroom, where education is bureaucratic, impersonal, and abstract—separated from a father's discipline and his occupation. This is also generally true of home schooling. Education in the modern world is almost completely feminized until the high school level.

The feminization of modern culture begins in the grammar school classroom. Socially, it is regarded as "women's work" to teach young children. There is a social stigma attached to men who teach young children.[12] Thus, the success indicators of American education until puberty are female standards: sitting quietly at a desk, good penmanship, neatness, and unquestioned subordination to authority. Boys who meet these criteria tend to be regarded by other boys as sissies, i.e., imitation girls: non-athletic, non-confrontational, and bookish. There is a stigma attached to "book learning" for little boys. Mark Twain's character Huckleberry Finn is representative. Huck is an outdoorsman, someone who cannot stand Aunt Polly's feminine world. His friend Tom Sawyer is somewhere in between, but it is Huck, not Tom, who incarnates the masculine image of mid-nineteenth-century American youth.

This process began with the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century. In the 1700s, books on how to be a good parent were written for fathers. By the middle of the 1800s, they were written for mothers. In his excellent book, *Fatherless America*, David Blackenhorn made this observation: "Within the home, the father retained his formal status as chief executive, or head of the family, but had largely ceded to his wife the role of chief child raiser, manager, and decision maker. . . . Paternal authority declined as the fatherhood script came to be anchored in, and restricted to, two paternal tasks: head of the family and breadwinner."[13] Fathers leave home in the morning and come home in the evening. They do not take their sons to work.

12. This is why a day care center can be such a profitable family-run business: most men refuse to do it. On the supply side, this reduces competition. Meanwhile, on the demand side, unmarried women seek out male role models for their young children.

13. David Blackenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 15.

1. The Division of Labor

There were economic factors for this social change. The main one was the division of labor. It is less expensive in cities than in rural areas to match the specialized production skills of individuals with the demands of employers. There are more workers available in an urban geographical area. Population density is higher. Transportation costs per distance covered are less. Also, as capital invested per worker increases, production becomes more specialized. *Output per unit of resource input increases*. Therefore, wages increase. All of this leads to increased pay for urban workers. This is offset mainly by rising real estate costs, as demand for urban space increases.

Specialization accompanies capitalization. Fathers today are employees, not owners. They are not given time by their employers to teach their sons on the job. The extreme division of labor made possible by modern capitalism makes it unlikely that a son will follow his father in a family business. There is no family business, and the son's skills are different from his father's. A father rarely teaches his sons their lifetime trade.

Men change occupations several times in a career. The restructuring of modern corporations due to international competition is now threatening the lifetime employment practices of earlier generations, even in patriarchal Japan. So, education has to be performed in a specialized classroom setting, as it has always been for the very rich and well-placed elite corps of students who have been trained to staff the bureaucracies in man's history. But what has worked well for an educated and privileged elite has not worked equally well for the mass of students. Beyond basic literacy, the training appropriate for an elite bureaucracy is different from the training appropriate for students who do not fit into a book-oriented bureaucratic setting. Meanwhile, the impersonalism of a classroom has replaced the personalism of apprenticeship all over the world.

Women can be employed less expensively than men. Their income is normally supplemental to their husbands' income, or else they are single and can share the expenses of an apartment with other women. They can afford to work for less than a man can, especially a married man. The "school marm" has been a fixture of American education since at least the mid-nineteenth century. When knowledge of Latin ceased to be the criterion for all teaching positions, women began to replace men as teachers below the college level. College education was closed to all but a tiny minority, mainly masculine, throughout

the world until the late nineteenth century. In the United States, the creation of state-funded land-grant universities, beginning with Federal legislation that set aside Federal land for state-funded agricultural schools (1862), changed this by opening up college to both sexes. The elective system, which scrapped compulsory Latin and classical education, as well as compulsory chapel attendance, began at Harvard University in the 1880s and spread rapidly.[14] This moved higher education from theology—Latin had for centuries been the international language of theologians[15]—to science and the liberal arts. This was a worldwide shift in higher education. It replaced knowledge of Latin with the college diploma as the basis of access to teaching and ministerial positions. But college attendance was still highly restricted until after World War I. The great expansion of state-funded college education came after World War II. Women gained equal access to higher education, both economically and legally. Nevertheless, more than any other college major except possibly home economics, elementary education has been the choice of women, which is why it has the lowest prestige of any field except home economics.

For a century, the Boy Scouts offered an extra-curricular alternative to the feminized classroom, but scouting came midway in a boy's life. The Cub Scouts, a later development than the Boy Scouts, is run by mothers. Male scoutmasters run the Boy Scouts; boys are eligible when they turn age 10½. Scouting faded in popularity in the late twentieth century, reducing boys' personal contact with masculine authority except in the principal's office. Positive sanctions and most negative sanctions are imposed by women until children reach high school. In the final two years of high school, boys' academic achievement shoots ahead of girls' achievement in math and science, but this comes at age 15 or 16, late in the maturity process.[16]

---

14. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 187–89.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.

16. Reasons offered for this change have been both social and genetic. Social arguments include these. First, there are more male teachers at the high school level, who regard spirited intellectual competition as manly. They reward boys' behavior: more aggressive, questioning. Second, girls who are equally competitive with boys tend to be regarded as masculine and perhaps a threat to male egos. Girls who want to be popular with boys tend to be quiet, refuse to ask questions, and play the feminine role: submissive. They fall behind academically, especially in math and science. Girls test at 50 points below boys on the Scholastic Achievement Test in math: 450 vs. 500 out of 800 maximum. Jane Gross, "To Help Girls Keep Up, Girls-Only Math Classes," *New York Times* (Nov. 20, 1993). Problem: the girls do not test lower than boys in the language arts. Are they more aggressive in language arts classes? This seems doubtful. Another

In the final decades of twentieth-century, the gang replaced the family for hundreds of thousands of teenage ghetto youths, whose fathers were either absent or ineffectual. The gang is exclusively male, although there are female gangs that are extensions of male gangs. The gang is bound by a self-maledictory blood oath and some form of initiatory rite of passage. It becomes the educator for rebellious young men who have rejected the public school. It is far closer to the apprenticeship ideal. It offers an apprenticeship in crime.

2. The Decline of Apprenticeship

The move from the personalism of apprenticeship to the impersonalism of the classroom is economics-driven: a group of parents shares the cost of a tutor. There is a loss of personalism. There is a move from practical wisdom to instruction in abstract material and rote memorization. This is a continuing problem for modern education, as it has always been in bureaucratic or priestly education. The medical profession in the twentieth century adopted internship as a way to imitate apprenticeship: on-the-job training after graduation from medical school.[17]

The decline of apprenticeship has paralleled the rise of secular education: formal/bureaucratic rather than practical/profitable. The sellers of educational services have always sought access to a wider market of potential buyers by establishing common-ground, religiously neutral education. This has been going on since the earliest days of university education in the twelfth century: the rise of scholasticism and also the revival of Roman law at the University of Bologna.[18] Specialized instruction in technological fields also lends itself to the myth of neutrality. Graduate school education in the United States, except for theological seminaries, has been secular from its origins in the final quarter of the nineteenth century.[19]

---

explanation is genetic: girls think more abstractly than boys until puberty, when boys begin to catch up and then excel. There have been only two female grandmaster chess players: Jewish sisters. There are no females at the very top of the profession among physicists and mathematicians. There have been no major female composers of Western classical music, and few in popular music.

17. Internship is also a way to reward hospitals for cooperating in the restriction of the supply of physicians which state medical licensure necessarily entails. Hospitals receive the low-cost services of newly graduated physicians for several years. Reuben A. Kessel, "Price Discrimination in Medicine," *Journal of Law and Economics*, I (1958), pp. 29–32.

18. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 123–31.

19. Marsden, *Soul of the American University*, ch. 9.

The advent of Unitarian, state-funded education in nineteenth-century America separated religious confession from education. Progressive education has always been messianic: the substitution of the government school for God as the agent of redemption.[20] It has been at war with the educational criteria of Deuteronomy 6.

Ironically, it was training for the gospel ministry that first adopted the bureaucratic education model, beginning with the creation of the university in Western Europe in the twelfth century. The theological seminary appeared in 1808: Andover Seminary in Massachusetts. It was invented by Rev. Jedediah Morse because of the appointment of a Unitarian in 1805 to the chair of moral philosophy at Harvard College.

3. Solutions

Parents have the legal option of delegating authority to other teachers. The classic biblical example of this is God's delegation of authority over His son to earthly parents: the incarnation. The Old Covenant example is Hannah's vow to delegate Samuel's upbringing to Eli the priest (I Sam. 1). The parent must be sure that the teacher will be equally faithful in teaching God's Bible-revealed law to the child. A parent can send his child to live with a man who will apprentice the child. Also, a parent can hire a tutor, which is a traditional exception to direct parent-child instruction. This is an expensive solution. Both approaches retain the personalism of parent-child instruction.

There are Christians today who reject the biblical right of parents to delegate the teaching function, but all such objections end about the time that the critic's child is eligible for college. When a child reaches age 18, the critics of earlier delegated education insist that the parents now possess this right of delegation. Legally in the United States, this is true. The child legally becomes an adult, except for the right to buy alcohol. The child is said by the critics of Christian day schools to have become accountable, and the parents therefore become free from the teaching obligation when the child graduates from high school. Yet the parents still usually pay the child's education bills. In the Mosaic covenant, reaching age 20 authorized a man to join God's holy army (Ex. 30:14).

Parents are required by God's law to educate their children, morn-

20. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education: Studies in the History of the Philosophy of Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1963).

ing to evening. But because of the division of labor, some parents are better teachers than others. As specialization increases, the teaching skills of some parents become more evident. Parents will trade off: one parent comes in and teaches a group of students mathematics and science; another teaches music; another teaches a foreign language. To deny the legitimacy of joint teaching is to assert the ridiculous: the equal ability of all people in every field.[21] The assertion that a mother may not lawfully teach any children but her own is an assertion that: (1) all mothers are equally gifted teachers; or (2) any differences in teaching skills are irrelevant or insignificant in the outcome of education; or (3) children should be deprived of the specialized skills of several teachers until after high school. All three arguments are doomed. Parental concern for their children's education, as well as widespread parental exhaustion and defeat in the face of chemistry, physics, and calculus, will eventually overcome the arguments of the "parents-only" purists. Only if some impersonal high school curriculum appears in which the children teach themselves, either by computer or by private study, can the parents-only argument become remotely plausible. But even in such a case, the parent must delegate instructional responsibilities to the author of the software or the books. We are back to square one: parents are commanded to teach their children by means of biblical law. Either this responsibility may be delegated or else all programmed education from outside the family must cease.

Parental sovereignty over education must be restored. The fundamental starting point in the reconstruction of education is therefore the removal of all state funding and regulations. This includes tax-funded educational vouchers.[22] Economic sovereignty must match legal sovereignty. He who pays the piper should call the tune.

---

21. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (I Cor. 12:4–11). Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians* 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 15.

22. Gary North, "Educational Vouchers: The Double Tax," *The Freeman* (May 1976); North, "Vouchers: Politically Correct Money," *ibid.* (June 1995); "Friedman and North on Vouchers," *ibid.* (July, 1993).

Conclusion

The command to worship God by obeying His law was tied to sanctions: positive (inheritance) and negative (disinheritance). The ultimate threat to the Israelites was that God would remove them from the land if they worshipped the gods of Canaan. This was a land-based command. The gods of Canaan were land-based gods. If the Israelites did not have the moral strength to separate themselves spiritually and ritually from the gods of the land, God would separate them from both the land and its gods.

The sanctions related specifically to the inheritance and disinheritance of the land of promise. This threat was fulfilled twice: at the exile and after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The question arises: Were the sanctions more general than this? That is, was the command to worship God a cross-boundary law and therefore valid in the New Covenant? Yes, because the God of Old Covenant Israel is a universal God: the one and only true God. No other god may safely be worshipped.

When God ordered Israel to hear, He simultaneously ordered Israel to obey. The Christian community has ceased to hear or obey, except highly selectively. The churches' self-conscious rejection of God's Bible-revealed law, its mandated sanctions, and Christians' kingdom inheritance in history has undermined their assertion of God's absolute sovereignty (partial, says the Arminian) over history and the church's authority in history. A God who is not completely sovereign over history is not the Creator God of the Bible who providentially ordains everything that comes to pass. He does not issue announcements to pagan rulers as God did to King Cyrus:

> Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things (Isa. 45:1–7).

A partially sovereign god cannot legitimately assert his authority in history. No wonder, then, that modern Christians are convinced that their partially sovereign God has not issued unique laws as tools of dominion, nor has He offered a world-conquering vision to His followers. A God who does not impose predictable corporate sanctions in history is in no position to guarantee his followers a visible kingdom in history as a reward for obeying His laws.

16

GENOCIDE AND INHERITANCE

When the Lord *thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the* Lord *thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the* Lord *be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.*

DEUTERONOMY 7:1–5

The theocentric focus of this law is the final judgment, when God will cut off for all eternity all those who oppose Him. This eschatological focus was not clear to Israelites, for Israel had no concept of the final judgment, which is a New Testament doctrine. The final judgment is the ultimate example of inheritance and disinheritance. The bodily resurrection to eternal life and the bodily resurrection to eternal death (Rev. 20:14–15) are the models of earthly inheritance and disinheritance.

Chapters 6–26 are associated with point three of the biblical covenant model: ethics/law/dominion.[1] This passage deals with sanctions: Israel vs. the Canaanites. But these sanctions were part of a one-time

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

program of national dominion. This passage is immediately preceded by a call to obey God's law. "And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deut. 6:24–25). The verse that immediately follows this passage invokes holiness, which is another aspect of point three: boundaries. The word "holiness" means "set aside." We read: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth (Deut. 7:6). We see that the context of this passage is point three of the covenant.

A. Genocide

This law mandated genocide. Theologically, it reflected the final judgment: God's eternal disinheritance of covenant-breakers. What God told Israel do to the Canaanites is representative of what He will do in eternity to those who refuse to covenant with Him in history. There will be no post-resurrection covenants. Destruction will be total: worse than annihilation—eternal damnation. Adam's broken covenant will remain broken for all eternity. This was the theological foundation of genocide under the Old Covenant.

Israel's inheritance of Canaan was to be complete. Therefore, so was the Canaanites' disinheritance. The existing inhabitants of the land were to be driven out of the land or annihilated, preferably the latter. The Israelites were warned by God not to make a covenant of any kind with them. This included the marriage covenant, but it also included ecclesiastical and civil covenants. The separation of God from the idols of Canaan was to be total. This separation was to be enforced by the sword.

God forbade them to show any mercy to the inhabitants. Genocide had to include infants and children. We know this because of God's requirements regarding Israel's subsequent dealings with the Amalekites. "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (I Sam. 15:3). This was repayment for an event that had taken place four and a half centuries earlier: the refusal of Amalek to allow Israel to pass through their land at the time of the exodus. This established a condition of per-

manent warfare between Israel and Amalek. "For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Ex. 17:16). This was reaffirmed just before the conquest: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it" (Deut. 25:17–19). Samuel reminded Saul just before the final battle, over four centuries later: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt" (I Sam. 15:2). Saul lost his kingship for his refusal to destroy the animals and the king of the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:27–28). God has a long memory when it comes to imposing negative sanctions.

Total warfare against a city had already taken place outside of Canaan: at Hormah, where the Israelites destroyed Arad's kingdom (Num. 21:3). It would happen one time inside the land: at Jericho. It was also to have taken place under Saul. In all three cases, there were to be no spoils of war; everything was to be destroyed. But with respect to capital rather than people, Canaan was not to be totally destroyed. Israel would lawfully claim the wealth of Canaan as an inheritance.

B. Cause and Effect in Ancient Cosmology

Modern scholarship assumes that men's faith in God is based on deep-rooted psychological needs (which modern scholars have failed to overcome through the techniques of modern rationalism), tradition (which has been uprooted by modern society), and fear of the unknown (which has been superseded by fear of the known), rather than on the actual existence of a supernatural realm that affects cause and effect in history. The god of modern man is the noumenal god of Kant: dwelling impersonally beyond history in a realm of mystery that is related to history only through the autonomous ethical consciousness of individual men.[2] Scholars assume that primitive men,

2. Richard Kroner, *Kant's Weltanschauung* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1914] 1956).

past and present, have been unable to recognize the random character of many seemingly coordinated yet improbable events in history. Primitives have attributed these improbable events to a supernatural being's active intervention in history.

The scholars have misunderstood both the events and the primitives. The ancients understood full well the distinction between a random, improbable series of events and supernatural intervention into nature. For example, after each of the cities of Philistia was struck by a plague whenever the Ark of the Covenant was brought inside its boundaries, the priests advised the rulers to perform an empirical test. "Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us" (I Sam. 6:7–9). It had not been chance, they soon learned: the oxen took the cart and the Ark back to Israel.[3]

So, too, did Solomon understand the difference between a world governed by a combination of impersonal chance and impersonal fate vs. a world governed by a sovereign God. Solomon in his pain of recognition admitted what modern man prefers to suppress: belief in a world governed entirely by impersonal chance or impersonal fate or an impersonal mixture of the two leads to the madness of meaninglessness.

> The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity (Eccl. 2:14–15).
>
> For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity (Eccl. 3:19).
>
> All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacri-

3. Gary North, *Disobedience and Defeat: An Economic Commentary on the Historical Books* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 13.

> ficeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead (Eccl. 9:2–3).

Solomon, speculating as a philosopher, looked at death and saw it as the great leveling agent. He argued that if temporal life is all there is, then nothing has meaning, for one life cannot be distinguished from another, one species from another. To divinize the temporal by denying the supernatural is to surrender all meaning to death: the death of meaning.

C. Invoking Idols

The ancients were far wiser than modern man, for they tried to structure their lives in terms of a ritually responsive supernatural realm rather than an inherently incomprehensible impersonal realm.[4] They believed that local gods governed their lives rather than distant butterflies.[5] They did not deny what their eyes occasionally showed them, namely, that the supernatural can directly influence the course of history. They understood that priestly magic was not always trickery.

This understanding was the basis of their worship of local deities. Idols served as links in history between demons and men. The Bible speaks of idols as blind and deaf, but it does not speak this way of demons. It makes the point that an idol is not a god. The idol merely represents sources of supernatural power that men invoke by covenant oath and correct ritual procedure. Israel was warned not to establish covenants with the Canaanites, for the Canaanites invoked demons through their idols. God told Israel to destroy the idols of Ca-

4. Kant's noumenal realm is incomprehensible to the mind of man, yet it is held in dialectical tension with the partially knowable phenomenal realm. Man's mind supposedly holds the two realms together.

5. The "butterfly effect" is modern science's latest phrase to describe the effects of unknown. A butterfly's fluttering wings can supposedly set up wind patterns that produce a hurricane a continent away. Men probably do not believe this about literal butterflies and literal hurricanes, but they do believe that unnoticed, seemingly random, and incalculably undetectable causes produce measurable results. The first kind of event is too obscure for man to control; the second may be much too large to control. Man is trapped in a cosmic maelstrom not of his own or anyone else's making. The phrase "butterfly effect" was popularized in James Gleik's best-selling book, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987). For a cogent rebuttal, see Stanley L. Jaki, *The Only Chaos and Other Essays* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1990). Jaki was a Roman Catholic priest, physicist, and historian of science. Gleik was a *New York Times* reporter. Gleik was far better known than Jaki.

naan, not because idols can see and hear, but because they represent covenantal links between men and the occult realm of the demonic.

Because there are demons who act in history, they persuade men to believe that by invoking this or that deity, men can manipulate the cosmos. "As above, so below" is magic's statement of faith. The faith of someone who believes in magic is this: procedurally precise rituals performed here below can invoke power from on high to affect things here below. This faith is correct only insofar as Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). In fact, magic invokes power from below.[6] Men can manipulate local things, such as a voodoo doll, in order to produce specific effects at a distance. This is neither mind over matter ("telekenesis") nor words over matter. It is the invocation of demonic beings that have been given limited powers in history, such as the effects produced by Satan in his testing of Job.

The ancients knew that these powers can be invoked and manipulated by men for the ends of men. Idols of the ancient city represented demons who participated in the covenantal life of the family, clan, and city. This is why Paul warned that to participate in cultic feasts is to participate in devil worship: "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (I Cor. 10:19–21). This clear warning regarding pagan covenantal meals is in the chapter preceding his description of the church's covenantal meal.

Modern rationalists interpret the Bible so as to remove all traces of supernaturalism. They view the realm of the demonic as nonexistent, as impotent in history as carved idols or as impotent as God. They view the demonic as a self-serving invention of priestly magicians. Even a few Christians assume this: specifically, certain sleight-of-hand artists known today as magicians. They are not magicians; they are illusionists. Magic uses ritual to link supernatural forces to history: "as above, so below." But modern magicians view the supernatural as an illusion and their illusions as real.[7] I exchanged a long series

6. R. J. Rushdoony, "Power from Below," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, I (Winter 1974).

7. The most prominent illusionist denier of the supernatural is known professionally as the Amazing Randi.

of detailed letters with one such Christian illusionist, who insisted that Satan and his demons have never had any supernatural power in history. This man denied that the magicians of Egypt possessed supernatural powers, denied that the sticks they threw down actually turned into snakes, despite the clear statement of the text of the Bible that this took place (Ex. 7:12). No, he insisted, they merely used trickery to make it look as though they had conjured up snakes. On this point, he insisted, the Bible cannot possibly mean what it specifically says. I pointed out to him that this is the humanist's hermeneutics: interpreting the Bible in terms of modern man's anti-supernatural presuppositions, dismissing the God of the Bible along with the priests of Egypt. He did not change his mind. He viewed the priests of Egypt simply as skilled tricksters, as he is. That is, he chooses to believe that he and his humanist peers are every bit as clever as they were.

Modern man wants it both ways: to be as clever as the ancients, but far wiser. Modern man may be as clever; he is surely less wise. The priests of Egypt and Phoenicia could distinguish among chance, demons, and God. They could devise accurate tests to evaluate which was the dominant factor in particular situations: "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said" (Ex. 8:19). Modern man is more like Pharaoh than his magicians. As Jaki said, that which parades as modern scientific cosmology does not include the fear of God, which is the beginning of all wisdom.[8]

D. Localism or Cosmos

What holds the world together? The New Testament makes it clear: He who was born of God and woman does, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:14–17). *The unity of the cosmos is secured by the sovereignty of God*. Behind the seemingly infinite and therefore humanly immeasurable particulars of history and nature is cosmic personalism: the Creator-Sustainer God who has counted the hairs of every head (Matt. 10:30), or as

8. Jaki, *The Only Chaos*, p. 7.

modern man would put it, the subatomic particles of every galaxy. Butterflies and hurricanes are all part of God's decree.

Ancient religion did not emphasize the coherence of the cosmos, for the primary categories of ancient religion were pantheistic and animistic. The gods of Canaan were regarded by the inhabitants as local gods. They were cultic gods in the sense of familistic, clan-based, and civic. This was the common theological outlook of the ancient world, including Greece and Rome.[9] The boundaries of a city marked the limits of a local god's sovereignty. Beyond those boundaries, he could extend his reign only through military triumphs by members of his cult. When Ben-hadad's advisors explained the defeat of Syria by Israel, they invoked the localism of Israel's God (I Kings 20:28). This public theological assessment led to the destruction of Syria's army by Ahab's troops. Evil as Ahab was, God gave him the victory rather than to allow Ben-hadad imagine that the God of Israel was some local Near Eastern deity whose sovereignty was threatened by the military forces of Syria. God controlled events outside the geographical boundaries of Israel. The kings of the earth were required to acknowledge this. Adam had known and was required to acknowledge this verbally and ritually; so are the rest of us.

The idols of Canaan were representational. They mediated oath-bound covenants. This was why Israel was required to destroy the idols, groves, and other representations of demonic authority. The nations of Canaan were in covenantal subjection to covenant-breaking supernatural beings represented by idols. These beings promised power to men and delivered on the promise enough of the time to keep the power-seekers in covenantal bondage. God did not require the death of every man, woman, and child in Canaan merely because a handful of professional illusionists had used their skills to establish local priesthoods. Had the cults of Canaan been, cosmically speaking, nothing more than income-producing enterprises of prestidigitators who today would be entertaining crowds in Las Vegas gambling casinos, God would not have mandated genocide.

God promised to give Israel victory over the inhabitants of the land. This meant that every covenantal agent of demonic forces had to die, so that there would be no further invocation of local demons. The demons of the ancient city operated inside geographical boundaries imposed by God. No demon could exercise its powers at will

9. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955).

across the face of the earth. Thus, when a city fell to an invader, the participants on both sides recognized that the gods of the victorious city had participated in the defeat of the gods of the defeated city. Jesus made it clear that civil war is characteristic of Satan's kingdom.

> Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you (Matt. 12:22–28).

E. Annihilation: Sanctions Applied

Israel's defeat of the cities of Canaan was supposed to reflect God's defeat of the demons that were worshipped in those cities. To this extent, the magical formula, "as above, so below," was applicable.[10] What men would see on earth would reflect the warfare in heavenly places. This is why God required total annihilation. There would henceforth be no reasonable doubt: the God of Israel is sovereign. But Israel always doubted. This is why Israel failed to drive out or destroy all of the inhabitants. Israel's doubt regarding the trustworthiness of God's promise of total victory, which was to be manifested by Israel's comprehensive negative military sanctions in Canaan, laid the foundation of Israel's subsequent bouts with idolatry.

The military sanctions were comprehensive, but they were not total. The army of Israel drove out most of the land's inhabitants, but it did not drive out all of them (Josh. 15:63; cf. 17:12–13). This failure gave a foothold to the few remaining Canaanites to lure the Israelites into idol worship. The idols of Canaan represented demons whose power had not been totally extinguished by God because Israel had failed to destroy every trace of their places of covenant renewal and the people who were under these pre-invasion covenants. Just before his death, Joshua announced: "Know for a certainty that the LORD

10. The request in the Lord's Prayer, "in earth, as it is in heaven," is a call for ethical correspondence, not metaphysical correspondence. It is preceded by "thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10).

your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:13). Thorns in your eyes: here was a powerful image to warn men of the effects of idolatry.

The Israelites were required by God to move from word to deed. God's word specified total annihilation. This was the mandatory deed. By removing the idols and the inhabitants, Israel would inherit everything of Canaan's that was worth inheriting.

F. Human Capital and Technology

The division of labor is basic to wealth. To increase the division of labor, men save—restrict their present consumption—in order to produce capital goods that they expect to produce consumer goods and services in the future. Thrift finances the increase of goods and services.

In recent decades, it has become more clear to economists that human capital is a very valuable resource.[11] Genocide is the antithesis of the division of labor: the systematic destruction of highly developed human capital. While Israel was promised the vineyards and houses of their enemies, there was no doubt that the skills used to produce such wealth would perish with the destruction of the inhabitants. Nevertheless, God required annihilation. This would reduce the division of labor compared to what it could have been through local trade.

Why did God require this? What cost-benefit analysis informed God that it was better for Israel to reduce the division of labor by destroying the inhabitants of the land? We can only guess, but our guesses can be informed guesses.

The essence of magic is the principle of something for nothing, or at least something costly for something seemingly inexpensive. Light a few candles, recite some incantations, paint a design on some convenient surface, and presto: you get what you want. There is no requirement that the participants plan and save for the future, or select the proper mix of land, labor, and capital. There is no doubt that the Canaanites had understood conventional economic planning, which is why they left a legacy to Israel. But undergirding their concept of economic cause and effect was their reliance on supernatural

11. Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

forces that promised something for practically nothing. The demons required covenantal subordination. Their covenants elevated magical formulas and rituals above rational planning and prayer. The productivity of economic planning was assumed by Canaanites to require rituals such as human sacrifice and temple prostitution. Power from below was understood as necessary for power in history. It was this invocation of magical power through debauchery and murder that God would not tolerate.

There was rational planning in Canaan. The physical capital left behind by the former inhabitants proved this. But technology is not neutral. *Technology is applied cosmology*. It is governed by assumptions regarding cosmology: cause and effect. These assumptions govern the development and application of technology. The assumptions governing Canaanite technology were so demonic that God wanted Israel to destroy all traces of that cosmology by destroying all those who professed it. The ultimate resource is not the human mind, contrary to modern economists. *The ultimate resource is a confession of faith which acknowledges the God of the Bible as the master of the universe and the source of man's abundance* (Deut. 8:18).[12] The *theological content* of the Christian confession of faith and the *scientific worldview* that it produces are the source of long-term economic growth.

Modern technology is the outworking of what the world called *technology* before the seventeenth century: *grammar*.[13] Modern technology rests on the grammar of science. So did late medieval technology, which was highly sophisticated both in theory and application.[14] Modern man invokes the repeatable wonders of science through written formulas that are governed by a series of assumptions regarding cause and effect. The grammar of mathematics underlies modern technology, but this grammar is not autonomous; it rests in turn on a host of presuppositions regarding the coherence of man's reasoning processes and the relation of this coherence to the external world.[15]

To what extent is the grammar of science and number dependent on the grammar of faith? Canaan's buildings did not fall down. Ca-

12. Chapter 22.
13. Jaki, *The Only Chaos*, p. 124.
14. *Ibid.*, ch. 3.
15. Vern S. Poythress, "A Biblical View of Mathematics," in Gary North (ed.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976), ch. 9; cf. Eugene Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," *Communications on Pure and Applied Mathematics*, XIII (1960), pp. 1–14.

naanites planted fields continued to produce food, despite the Canaanites' denial of God's sovereignty. Their accumulated capital was transferrable. How was this possible? Because man is made in the image of God. This common humanity brings with it common knowledge by means of common grace.[16] Such knowledge, like the knowledge of cooking, is affected by time and place; it produces recognizable variations, but like recipes, it is repeatable and therefore transferrable. Accurate scientific formulas are universally valid, according to the theory of modern science. Their accuracy is not dependent on a personal confession of correct theology. But scientific formulas are not invoked outside of the processes of history, which are *always* covenantal. Scientific formulas and their applications are influenced by covenantal cause and effect in history. Some societies inherit; others are disinherited. The point is, because scientific formulas and the knowledge that underlies them are transferrable—universal, in other words—they and their products can be inherited. This is why the wealth of the sinner can be laid up for the just (Prov. 13:22).[17]

G. Economic Growth Through Imported Knowledge

Economic growth is a process of compounding.[18] The division of labor is extended over time, not just across borders. The extension of per capita wealth through the extension of the division of labor is dependent on the maintenance of social order. It is not just free trade across borders that makes men rich. There must be saving, wise investing, and scientific discovery.[19] There must be social development, which includes a *progressive commitment to the moral boundaries imposed by biblical law*. What the conquest of Canaan teaches us is that God calls to a temporal halt the path of economic development of certain social orders. This is not a random cessation of development. Inheritance and disinheritance are linked covenantally. Jeremiah announced:

> Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will

16. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

17. Gary North, *Wisdom and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Proverbs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2007] 2012), ch. 41.

18. Chapter 14.

19. John Jewkes, David Sawyers, and Richard Stillerman, *The Sources of Invention*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1969).

> return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD" (Jer. 12:14–17).

Canaan's division of labor was soon to be cut off. It was about to be replaced by Israel's division of labor. Canaan's approach to science and technology had to end. A new social order would use Canaan's physical capital to extend God's dominion. *The genocidal disinheritance of Canaan would provide the physical inheritance of Israel*. This inheritance was not to include knowledge that was in any way dependent on the invocation of Canaan's gods. "And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place" (Deut. 12:3). Israel failed in this exercise of religious intolerance, which is why Joshua warned against invoking the names of regional gods. "That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the names of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them" (Josh. 23:7).

God is the Creator, the source of all accurate knowledge. His universalism gives His people an enormous advantage. They are in a position to make productive use of the discoveries of other nations and other religions. But the use of such information is limited by biblical law. To the extent that such information is dependent on the invocation of the name of any other god, it may not lawfully be used by His people.

This means that occult knowledge is forbidden. Knowledge that is available only to the initiate into a cult or secret society is not valid, although this knowledge may be true within limits. But if such knowledge can be separated from the name of the god invoked by the cult, it is eligible to become part of the covenant-keeper's inheritance. An example would be the mathematical knowledge developed within the confines of the Pythagorean cult. Initiation into that oath-bound cult would have been forbidden to covenant-keeping Israelites, but both studying and applying the Pythagorean theorem regarding right triangles would have been legitimate activities. The truth of the theorem is not dependent on the ritual practices of the cult. The theorem became part of the inheritance of the West, which for a millennium meant Christendom.

The key issue is the oath: *to swear by*. The oath places man covenantally under the god invoked by the oath. Wealth, including knowledge, that is obtainable only through such oath-taking is not part of a legitimate inheritance. If the secrets of the cult pass into the public domain, as Pythagorean mathematics did, then covenant-keepers may lawfully put them to good use. Using Euclidian geometry is valid because there is no oath involved. But to seek membership in the cult in order to gain inside knowledge of its economically advantageous secrets, even to make them public, would be valid only as part of a government-directed spying operation in a war effort, such as was used in the conquest of Canaan: the spies (Josh. 2). It would then be a matter of military conquest, not economic gain. It would be a matter of the sword, not the purse. Industrial spying is therefore invalid, even if done by governments, as it surely is in the modern world. So is joining a secret order that promises business or political success. C. S. Lewis called this the desire for membership in the inner ring, and he warned against it.[20]

H. Universal God, Regional Capital

God is not threatened by other gods. Over time, His people become less threatened by other religions. The Israelites were forbidden to speak the names of other gods. "And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth" (Ex. 23:13). Is this law still in force? If it is in force, is it to be taken literally? Or is it an injunction against invocation? The prophets mentioned the names of other gods. So did Stephen at his stoning (Acts 7:43). This was an aspect of the study of comparative religions: announcing the superiority of God to His rivals. The prohibition against speaking the names of other gods must have been an injunction against another kind of speaking, namely, covenantal or magical invocation.

After their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jews did not again go after other gods. Their susceptibility to idolatry had ended. Hellenism and legalism became problems, but idolatry did not. The threat today is the threat of syncretism, also known as pluralism: the acceptance of anti-theistic presuppositions by the covenant-keeping community.[21]

---

20. C. S. Lewis, "The Inner Ring" (1944), in Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 93–105.

21. Chapter 15:D. See Appendix H: "Week Reed: The Politics of Compromise."

The universality of God and His covenants makes it possible for covenant-keepers to accept the non-oath-bound findings of rival religious worldviews. God's church is not regional, nor was it ever intended to be. It crosses the boundaries of geography and time. The church in the broadest sense is the means of absorbing new information and making such information even more productive. It is to disseminate information and vision. Christendom's productivity is supposed to undermine all covenant-breaking social orders, bringing them face to face with the sanctions of God in history: positive and negative. This offensive conquest is not by the sword but by faith and productivity.

Discoveries always cross borders. Useful knowledge cannot be monopolized for long. The question is: Will covenant-keepers gain and retain the dominant influence in the interpretation and applications of these discoveries, or will their covenantal enemies gain control over them by means of these discoveries? In other words, *whose inheritance is it*? There can be no neutrality. One side or the other will inherit. The idea that these discoveries are covenantally neutral is incorrect. *Truth comes only from God, and this includes the interpretation of theories and facts*. Meanwhile, truths that are accepted by covenant-breakers are always misinterpreted because they deny God as the origin of all truth. As time goes on, this misinterpretation becomes more consistent, i.e., more consistently wrong. Truths are not regarded by covenant-breakers as testimonies to the God of the Bible (Rom. 1:20–25).[22] Such truths are always held down through unrighteousness, which brings God's judgment in history: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). The visible sign of such judgment is open homosexuality (Rom. 1:26–27). Legalized homosexuality in any society is a curse of God for corporate unbelief. It is a prelude to corporate destruction.

So, the benefits of science and technology are always dependent on the proper use of knowledge. If covenant-keepers are unable or unwilling to set the terms of discourse for new discoveries and the application of old ones, then the wealth generated by these discoveries will eventually undermine faith: "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17).[23] This will eventually result in negative sanctions: "And it shall

22. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 2.

23. Chapter 21.

be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God" (Deut. 8:19–20).[24]

I. Open Borders

The Israelites were not going to be welcomed by the Canaanites. Even if they had come peacefully, they would not have been welcomed. They represented a threat to the Canaanite social order. They were people who were covenanted to another God. Religious pluralism was impossible. One side or the other would win.

Israel later welcomed strangers from other lands. Why weren't those immigrants a threat to Israel, just as Israel had been to Canaan? First, because immigrants entered Israel on Israel's terms: open obedience to God's civil law was required. Proselyting for a rival god was a capital crime (Deut. 13:6–10). Second, because the gods of such immigrants would not be local gods. These immigrants had left the domain of their regional gods. Idols of non-universal gods were not a major threat to Israel. As for gods that made universal claims, there were none in the pre-captivity, pre-empire Old Covenant era. All rival gods were local. After the Babylonian captivity, the gods of a series of empires shared their pantheon with conquered deities of conquered nations. These were not universal gods in the sense that Israel's God was: a God who shared no pantheon space with rivals. The gods of Greece were local civic gods,[25] or animistic gods,[26] or else the contrived Olympian gods, the joint products of Homeric poetry and the pan-Hellenic games. In contrast, Greek philosophy made universal claims, and Hellenism did become a major problem for Jews and Christians. But Hellenism was not tied to idols.

Israel allowed open borders because God did not allow public proselyting or public observance of rival religions. The civil order was established by a covenantal oath to God. He, and He alone, was the acknowledged sovereign of Israel. In Elijah's day, this law was being violated by priests of Baal. His confrontation on Mt. Carmel

24. Chapter 23.

25. Fustel, *Ancient City*, III:VI, pp. 146–55.

26. Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, [1922] 1991); *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912); *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1921), both available in online editions.

was designed to end this practice. "Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there" (I Kings 18:38–40).

1. Immigration

The main threat of immigration is covenantal, not economic. The increase in the national division of labor that takes place when immigrants arrive is a net benefit. The judicial problem arises because of the rival gods and rival philosophies that immigrants bring with them. The religious pluralism of modern Western politics relegates non-political covenants to *adiaphora*: things indifferent to political religion, so long as they do not infringe upon the realm of political religion. But we have found that political pluralism is as theocratic as any other religion. It will not tolerate challenges to its final authority from any realm outside of politics. Decade by decade, political religion extends its claims over all the other areas of life.

The modern immigrant brings with him gods that are as universal in their claims as the God of the Bible is. The local gods of ancient paganism are barely remembered, let alone understood. How can a society survive the claims to authority of the representatives of rival universal gods? How can these universal claims be harmonized with the universal claims of modern political religion? Harmonizing these claims has been the long-term national experiment of the Enlightenment era, beginning around 1700.

A businessman likes to have a growing supply of laborers who compete against each other to sell him their labor time. Immigration is a blessing for the employer. It increases the supply of labor, thereby lowering labor costs. But what if, after five years, these immigrants could vote themselves a share of his business? Then he would be more careful about who gains access to the nation. Naturalization makes the immigrant a participant in the modern welfare state: a citizen. He can lawfully exercise the civil sanction of voting. He can therefore gain legal entitlements to other people's wealth. So, modern political pluralism, when combined with the welfare state, creates a state of affairs in which those who already have the vote and capital resist the

arrival of immigrants who bring rival philosophies regarding what constitutes the good society and the legitimate means of obtaining it.

The economist reduces everything to economics: cost-benefit analyses. Economics is as relentless in its extension of its reductionism as any other academic worldview. That which is significant politically for an economist is whatever he can reduce to fit economic concepts.[27] The economist is unwilling to acknowledge that politics is covenantal even though politics is based on a binding oath of allegiance under a monopolistic legal order, which in turn has its origin in God's common grace civil covenant. Marriage and the church are also covenantal and so do not readily lend themselves to economic reductionism.[28] This is why the economist sounds unbelievable when he discusses immigration as if it were little more than international job-seeking. The immigrant no longer brings idols with him. Instead, he brings a worldview tied to another religious order. This worldview has legitimacy equal with all others in a pluralistic political order. Idols in Mosaic Israel did not. When he becomes a naturalized citizen, the modern ex-immigrant can work to impose this worldview by voting.

2. Madison and Rousseau

American Constitutional political theory relies on some version of Madison's theory of factions in *Federalist 10* to save republican democracy from Balkanization. Madison argued that political factions would cancel each other out, leaving commitment to the common civil order as the binding national confession. This implicitly assumed that there is a widely agreed-upon common source of justice, although Madison, like the United States Constitution, did not mention natural law. His argument was very close to Rousseau's argument for the absolute sovereignty of the General Will, expressed only

27. See, for example, James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962). Over two decades later, Buchanan won the Nobel Prize in economics, presumably for this work more than his subsequent studies. (Tullock, a lawyer with no formal economic training, was not mentioned publicly by the Nobel Committee.)

28. One of the unresolved problems in economics is the economic analysis of prostitution. While the economist argues that "everything has a price," no unmarried economist acknowledges publicly that he much prefers sex from a prostitute to sex in marriage because of prostitution's tremendous cost savings. "Don't buy: rent!" Few men say that renting sexual favors from strangers is a better deal for them than bearing the burden of supporting a wife. Sex that is available for hire makes it inherently less valuable in most would-be buyers' eyes than marital sex.

through politics, over all other voluntary contracts and institutions. Madison's theory privatizes non-political relations, removing them from issues of state; Rousseau's absorbs all other relations into politics. I call Madison's view political Unitarianism.[29] The end result is the same: the common bond of politics.

Because covenantal consensus breaks down when the census reveals diversity, modern pluralistic society faces a crisis: cacophony. As Cornell University professor W. Pearce Williams put it in a 1983 letter to the *New York Times*, "we live in a consensual society in which we often have to do things we don't want to do, or even think are wrong, because we have agreed to abide by majority rule. Destroy that argument, and the result is not freedom but anarchy—a condition which the United States seems rapidly approaching."[30]

Immigration is from two sources: foreign countries and mothers' wombs. The abortion movement is an anti-immigration movement of unique commitment. The abortionists resent the welfare implications of motherhood, but they also resent it with respect to the state. They see babies as welfare cases. Margaret Sanger was the founder of Planned Parenthood, still the best organized pro-abortion organization in the United States. In her book, *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922), she criticized the inherent cruelty of all welfare states. She insisted that organized efforts to help the poor are the "surest sign that our civilization has bred, is breeding, and is perpetuating constantly increasing numbers of defectives, delinquents, and dependents."[31] Such charity must be stopped, she insisted. The fertility of the working class must be regulated in order to reduce the production of "benign imbeciles, who encourage the defective and diseased elements of humanity in their reckless and irresponsible swarming and spawning."[32] Swarming (like insects), spawning (like fish): here was marvelous zoological rhetoric from the lionized founder of Planned Parenthood. "If we must have welfare, give it to the rich, not the poor," she concluded.[33] "More children from the fit, less from the unfit: that is the chief issue of birth control."[34] For abortionists, the womb is an

29. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), pp. 450–52.

30. Cited in Jaki, *The Only Chaos*, p. 43.

31. Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (New York: Brentano's, 1922), p. 108; cited in George Grant, *Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood*, 2nd ed. (Franklin, Tennessee: Adroit, 1992), p. 27.

32. Sanger, *ibid*., p. 115; cited in Grant, *ibid*.

33. *Ibid*., p. 96; cited in Grant, *ibid*., p. 28.

34. Sanger, "Birth Control," *Birth Control Review* (May 1919); cited in Grant, *ibid*., p. 27.

open border. They seek to kill all those who would cross it without authorization.

What is the biblical solution? Respect for covenantal oaths. The marriage oath creates a claim on open entry for the biological fruit of marriage. This legal claim must be defended by the civil government when some mothers seek to revoke it. Second, the civil oath grants authority to impose God's sanctions. Those who are not under the terms of the civil oath should not be allowed to impose its terms on others. Thus, immigration is economically legitimate. What is not legitimate as a Christian ideal is a civil oath that does not bind men to allegiance to the God of the Bible. God brings negative sanctions against all rival civil oaths, and open immigration leads to two such sanctions: the breakdown of society (anarchy) or the substitution of a theocratic oath to a rival god. Roger Williams' experiment in tiny Rhode Island—a civil order without an oath to God—became the first operational model of the Enlightenment's much larger experiment in religious pluralism. We can safely predict concerning how this professedly neutral civil covenant will end: broken.

Conclusion

God told Israel to conquer Canaan by force. The Israelites were prohibited from making any sort of covenant with them. The best way to prevent this was to destroy every last one of them, so that the nation would not be in a position to make additional covenants.

This reduction in the available division of labor obviously was a threat to the transfer of local knowledge: either saving knowledge to the Canaanites or destructive knowledge from the Canaanites. The benefits of whatever technical knowledge possessed by the Canaanites would not offset the liabilities of the covenantal worldview which accompanied their technical knowledge. Israel was more vulnerable to the knowledge possessed by Canaan than Canaan was to the knowledge possessed by Israel. This would not always be true, but it took the captivity and the occupation of the land by outsiders—later called Samaritans—to reduce this vulnerability. Any surviving post-conquest local gods of Canaan had by then been visibly defeated by the gods of Assyria, Babylon, and Medo-Persia. In terms of the theology of the ancient Near East, this defeat had removed them permanently as historical forces to contend with or contend for. No society invoked the gods of Canaan after the rise of the empires.

17

BY LAW OR BY PROMISE?

> *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the* LORD *sware unto your fathers.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:1

The theocentric framework of this law is the dominion covenant: the command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:27–28).[1] It is an aspect of point three: ethics/law/boundaries. Obedience to God's law produces dominion.

A. Economic Growth

Deuteronomy 8 is by far the most important passage in the Bible dealing with the topic of Adam Smith's classic 1776 book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.* It announced the covenantal pattern for economic growth: grace, subordination, law, sanctions, and inheritance. It listed the unmerited gifts that God gave to Israel, from Israel's deliverance out of bondage to the raw materials of the Promised Land. This is all grace. Twice Moses called upon the Israelites to remember God's grace (vv. 2, 18). This was a call to subordination. Four times he reminded them to keep God's commandments (vv. 1, 2, 6, 11). He spoke of the positive sanction of economic growth (v. 13) and the negative sanction of expulsion from the land (vv. 19, 20). Yet the entire chapter deals with the inheritance: the land of Israel. To maintain this inheritance, the Israelites had to obey biblical law. In other words, their maintenance of the inheritance was ethically conditional.

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 4.

The passage begins with a call to obedience. Moses warned the generation of the conquest to obey all of God's commandments. The theme of *covenantal faithfulness through national obedience* is continual in Deuteronomy, for only through corporate covenantal obedience to the Mosaic law could the conquest generation maintain its inheritance. The language of the text is clear: collecting the promised inheritance was conditional. "**All the commandments** which I command thee this day shall ye **observe to do**, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and **possess the land** which **the LORD sware unto your fathers**."

This verse raises a theological problem regarding the terms of inheritance. God had sworn to the patriarchs that He would give the land to Israel. He had promised Abraham that the fourth generation would inherit (Gen. 15:16).[2] The theological question is this: Was Israel's inheritance legally secured by God's promise or by their obedience to the law?

B. Circumcision and Inheritance

In the context of God's promise to Abraham that his seed would inherit, Paul wrote: "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:18). Paul was speaking of Jesus Christ, not the Israelites, as the inheriting Seed. He was speaking of the kingdom of God, not the land of Canaan. Nevertheless, the judicial question was the same in both cases: *By law or by promise*? Paul argued clearly: by promise. On this passage, Protestantism rests much of its case for salvation by grace rather than works: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (v. 14).

Yet there is no doubt that one legal condition for Israel's inheritance was circumcision. Abraham was required to circumcise his household's males (Gen. 17:12–13). The Israelites, in turn, were required to circumcise their household males. The generation of the exodus had failed to do this, so Joshua had the conquest generation circumcised as soon as they crossed the boundary of the Jordan River (Josh. 5:7). The promise to Abraham remained valid, but to qualify judicially as the generation of the conquest, all of the males had to be circumcised. Wasn't circumcision a work of the law? Yes. So, if inheritance was by circumcision, how could it be by promise?

2. *Ibid.*, ch. 23.

To make sense of this seeming anomaly, we should seek a solution by considering *the judicial nature of the Abrahamic promise*. The fourth generation would inherit, God had promised (Gen. 15:16). He had immediately sealed that promise with a covenantal oath-sign: passing a fire between pieces of a dismembered animal (Gen. 15:17). This was a sanctions-bound self-maledictory oath. It meant this: "So let it be done unto Me if I do not bring to pass what I have promised to Abraham." But what constituted a generation? Judicially, this had to mean *circumcised sons*. A man was not an Israelite by birth; he was an Israelite by covenant. "And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Gen. 17:14).

The external mark of this covenant was circumcision. The same was true corporately of the inheriting generation. They would not become that promised generation by birth; they would become that generation by covenant. The promise was secure; nevertheless, conformity to the definitional terms of the promise mandated the work of circumcision: no circumcision–no generation; no generation–no fulfillment of the promise. So, the judicial basis of the fourth generation's inheritance was obedience to God's specially revealed law: circumcision. Yet the judicial basis of the *possibility* of inheritance was promise.

This two-fold conclusion is inescapable: (1) *promise* as the judicial basis of God's *granting* of the inheritance to Israel through Abraham; (2) Israel's *obedience* as the judicial basis of His *transferring* it to them as promised. The special form of obedience was the oath. Circumcision was an oath sign.[3]

Protestant commentators have gone out of their way to avoid discussing the fourth generation's circumcision as the judicial requirement for collecting the inheritance. It is clear why they have done this: the Pauline doctrine of inheritance by promise. While James did not write about the judicial basis of Christ's inheritance, we can be fairly sure what he would have written: *inheritance by Christ's obedience*. To mark Himself as the heir—the *lawful* heir—of the promise, Christ had to obey the law. The situation facing the fourth generation was analogous: to mark themselves as the lawful heirs of the promise, they had to obey the law.

Paul wrote of Abraham, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the

3. Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1968), ch. 3.

law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect" (Rom. 4:13–14). But on what is saving faith grounded judicially? Answer: on the substitutionary atonement of Christ. This atonement was grounded judicially in the perfection of Christ, who obeyed the whole of the law of God. He was a perfect sacrifice; no other would have sufficed to placate God's wrath. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8–9). *Christ's legal sonship was marked by His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto death*. Analogously, the fourth generation's heirship was marked by their circumcision, even unto risking death, i.e., their temporary military incapacity while inside the boundaries of the Promised Land. They were military invaders, yet they deliberately incapacitated themselves as a nation. They placed their faith in God's promise to Abraham, not in their own military might.

Protestants speak of unmerited grace. With respect to the *recipients* of grace, grace is indeed unmerited. Men do not merit God's favor on their own account. But with respect to the *judicial basis* of grace, it is completely merited by the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unmerited grace is grounded in Christ's merit through obedience. This merit is a *legal claim*, and as heirs to grace through their adoption by God through Christ, this legal claim passes to the elect. Salvation is legally claimed by the elect, not on the basis of their obedience, but on the basis of Christ's obedience. *Grace is grounded in biblical law, which includes the Abrahamic law of circumcision, by means of one man's perfect fulfilling of biblical law's stipulations*.

So, to discuss Israel's inheritance in terms of promise only or law only is to discuss half of the legal transaction. The inheritance was established by grace through God's promise, but there was supposed to be obedience on the part of the fourth generation. Joshua understood the legal conditions of this inheritance. Israel might, by God's grace, inherit without obedience, but they were supposed to obey. This was Moses' message to them, too: *maintenance of the kingdom grant was conditional*. As the author of the Hebrews put it, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

C. Maintaining the Kingdom Grant

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers" (Deut. 8:1). This was not the announcement of the judicial definition of what constituted the fourth generation, namely, circumcision. This was an announcement of a covenantal link between obedience and inheritance. How can we make theological sense of Moses' words? He invoked the promise while mandating obedience.

First, we must ask: Did Moses expect the blessings listed in Deuteronomy 8 to unfold sequentially? Did he mean to say that the fourth generation had to obey the commandments in order for God to multiply them, to be followed by their conquest of the land? Obviously not, since he was preparing them for the conquest, not for a long period of population growth as the means of military conquest. Their multiplication would come after they had secured the land. Yet the text places multiplication prior to the securing of the land. If we take his words as *sequentially* meaningful, his call to obedience would make no chronological sense. The conquest would be delayed for another generation. But the fourth generation had to inherit.

Second, we must ask: What was Moses getting at? Answer: the requirement that Israel obey God in order to possess the land, maintain the land, and multiply in the land. Israel obeyed God first by submitting to circumcision. This act of obedience preceded the conquest. While the people might have relied on God's grace to enable them to conquer the land without being circumcised, instead they relied on God's grace to enable them to escape military defeat during their time of physical incapacity.[4] In both scenarios, they had to rely on grace: the promise, which Moses cited. They could be sure of the promise. The question was: How best to claim their grace-based inheritance. By refusing to be circumcised or by risking a military setback? They chose the latter.

Grace precedes law in both God's covenant of creation and His covenant of redemption. He gave the law to Adam (Gen. 2:16) after He had given Adam life and land (Gen. 2:7–14). This is the covenantal pattern: *grace precedes law*. James Jordan wrote: "God's Word is always promise before it is command. . . . God always bestows the

4. They knew the story of Shechem: how Simeon and Levi had slaughtered them while the Shechemites were recovering from circumcision (Gen. 34:25–26).

Kingdom as a gift before presenting us with our duties in it."[5] The kingdom had been bestowed on Abraham as a gift. That is, the land had long ago been assigned to Abraham's heirs. God had transferred the land to Israel by grace and promise, but He had not yet transferred legal title to the new owners. That would come through military conquest. They had received the law at Sinai four decades earlier, not two centuries earlier. They had been tested in the wilderness in terms of the Mosaic law, and the fourth generation had passed these tests. After the conquest, they would have to remain judicially faithful in order to retain possession.

Grace always precedes law in God's dealings with His subordinates. *We are in debt to God even before He speaks to us*. The land grant was based on the original promise given to Abraham. That promise came prior to the giving of the Mosaic law.[6] This is why Jordan said that the laws of Leviticus are more than legislation; the focus of the laws is not simply obedience to God, but rather on maintaining the grant.[7] Israel's basis of maintaining the grant was ethics, not the sacrifices. Man cannot maintain the kingdom in sin.[8]

Moses continued: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (v. 2). This would seem to violate the principle of grace preceding redemption. God had humbled them in order to see whether or not they would obey Him. The giving of the law at Sinai was followed by the negative sanction of national humiliation. Only four decades later was the prospect of inheritance before them. This seems to point to another pattern: law-humiliation-grace.

To whom was Moses speaking? To the heirs of a formerly enslaved nation. The giving of the law did not take place in an historical vacuum. It took place after a series of miraculous deliverances. The giving of the Mosaic law was the culminating act of national deliverance. Grace precedes law, but it does not annul law. *Law confirms grace*. It ratifies a prior gift of God.

---

5. James B. Jordan, *Covenant Sequence in Leviticus and Deuteronomy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), p. 7.

6. *Ibid*., p. 8.

7. *Ibid*., p. 9.

8. *Ibid*., p. 11.

D. Covenantal Predictability and Social Theory

Is the historical fulfillment of God's promises separate from the law? Not according to Moses. Is this fulfillment separate from the recipients' fulfillment of the law? Only partially. Grace may bring fulfillment despite a period of rebellion. Nevertheless, there is a covenantal pattern announced in the law, but especially in Deuteronomy: obedience brings blessings; disobedience brings cursings. Inheritance and disinheritance are not random; they are predictable covenantally. They are not predictable perfectly in all cases because *grace is greater than sin*. Negative sanctions are sometimes delayed despite sin (e.g., the Amorites in Canaan, Abraham to Moses—an example of common grace). But our affirmation of grace must not become an affirmation of historical indeterminism regarding corporate blessings and cursings. A person who invokes grace in order to deny the consequences of law becomes an ally of covenant-breakers. *He has denied the covenant*. He has denied the historical relevance of God's law in history. But history does not take place in a judicial vacuum. Other law-orders will be imposed in order to govern men, including Christians. We must decide: God's law or chaos? God's law or tyranny?

Whenever the covenantal predictability of corporate inheritance and disinheritance is denied, a uniquely biblical social theory becomes impossible. This is why Lutheranism has always been incapable of producing independent social theory. Luther was adamant about the irrelevance of Christianity for legal theory. To rulers, Luther wrote: "Certainly it is true of Christians, so far as they themselves are concerned, are subject neither to law [n]or sword, and have need of neither. But take heed and fill the world with real Christians before you attempt to rule in a Christian and evangelical manner."[9] As for true Christians, "these people need no temporal law or sword. If all the world were composed of real Christians, that is, true believers, there would be no need for or benefits from prince, king, sword, or law."[10] Luther was an ethical dualist.[11] Because Lutheranism denies any relevance to biblical law in the arrival of corporate blessings, it must invoke ethical dualism: natural law or pagan law for the civil

9. Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should Be Obeyed" (1523), *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), XLV, p. 91.

10. *Ibid*., p. 89.

11. Charles Trinkaus, "The Religious Foundations of Luther's Social Views," in John H. Mundy, *et al., Essays in Medieval Life* (Cheshire, Connecticut: Biblo & Tannen, 1955), pp. 71–87. Cf. David J. Lose, "The Ambidextrous God: Luther on Faith and Politics," *Word & World*, XIX (Summer 1999), pp. 260–67.

sphere, personal morality for the individual Christian, and silence regarding the church. But what is true of Lutheranism is equally true of any form of Christianity which uses the doctrine of grace to annul the covenantal predictability of corporate sanctions. *When Calvinism abandons faith in covenantal predictability in history, it ceases to be Calvinism; it becomes Lutheran*.[12]

Protestant social theology has almost always been Lutheran in content, if not form: an unstable mixture of personal Christian morality combined with humanistic, common-ground natural law theory. Personal morality is regarded as having had no meaningful implications for the development of social theory. This delivers social theory into the hands of covenant-breakers and their intellectual allies within the church, who share the covenant-breakers' assumptions regarding the possibility of both ethical neutrality and epistemological neutrality, as well as the irrelevance or even harmful effects of Old Testament law on society. When theonomists challenge this unofficial but long-term alliance, they are challenged with some variation of the following: "The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us" (Ex. 5:21). Dispensational author David Allen Lewis offered this reason for rejecting Christian Reconstruction: it may upset humanists, who will inevitably become more powerful. "[A]s the secular, humanistic, demonically-dominated world system becomes more and more aware that the Dominionists and Reconstructionists are a real political threat, they will sponsor more and more concerted efforts to destroy the Evangelical church. Unnecessary persecution could be stirred up."[13]

12. This is what Meredith G. Kline's denial of God's predictable sanctions in history represents. See Kline, "Comments on an Old-New Error," *Westminster Theological Journal*, XLI (Fall 1978), p. 184. Kline's former student and full-time disciple Michael Horton has been far more open regarding this quest for a Lutheran-Calvinist reconciliation. The judicial basis of such a reconciliation must be Calvinism's acceptance of Lutheranism's ethical dualism, which Horton's two-kingdoms theology promotes. In a letter to *Christian News* (Nov. 13, 1995), a conservative Lutheran publication, he wrote of his organization, CURE, that "we are building a cooperative effort between the Reformed and Lutheran Christians in an effort to restore a Reformation witness." Horton left the Reformed Episcopal Church and joined the Christian Reformed Church in 1995. In 1998, he joined the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, in historical theology.

13. Lewis, *Prophecy 2000* (Green Forest, Arkansas: New Leaf Press, 1990), p. 277.

Conclusion

Moses told the conquest generation to obey God's law. Yet he also cited the promise. He said that the long-term success of the conquest was dependent on their continued covenantal faithfulness. Yet the promise God made to Abraham was secure: sealed by an oath-sign. Their conquest of the land was guaranteed. Yet they were told to obey God's laws. *There can be no doubt that Moses invoked both the law and the promise*. This is what troubles Protestant commentators.

The solution to the problem is to recognize the judicial basis of the promise, which was a form of grace. All grace is grounded judicially on the perfect fulfillment of the whole of God's law. There must be perfect obedience. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). There can be no separation of law and promise, for *promise is grounded in law*. The question is: Whose obedience? The Christian answer is inescapable: *Jesus Christ's obedience*. So, the fulfillment of any promise rests judicially on Christ's fulfillment of the demands of the law. Grace is present because of the judicially representative character of Christ's fulfillment, just as the curse is present because of the judicially representative character of Adam's Fall. Imputation by God is fundamental: the imputation of Christ's perfection or the imputation of Adam's sin. God looks on each person and imputes—declares judicially—one or the other moral condition. Then He pronounces sentence: "Guilty" or "Not guilty."

The Israelites would soon mark themselves, both literally and symbolically, as lawful heirs to the promise through circumcision. This they did under Joshua. In the wilderness, it had not mattered so much that they were not circumcised, but after they crossed the boundary of the land, they would have remained profane—sacred boundary violators—had they not become circumcised.[14] To avoid remaining profane, they submitted to circumcision. Then they proceeded to remove the truly profane nations from the land.

Moses was also warning them in this passage about the ethical basis of maintaining the kingdom grant. A nation of covenant-breakers could not indefinitely occupy the Promised Land. God would remove them (Deut. 8:19–20).[15]

14. On the biblical concept of the profane, see Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994) 2012), ch. 6.

15. Chapter 22.

18

MIRACLES, ENTROPY, AND SOCIAL THEORY

> *And thou shalt remember all the way which the* LORD *thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the* LORD *doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:2–4

The theocentric focus of this law is the absolute sovereignty of God over the creation, including man. The test of the nation's commitment to God—"what was in thine heart"—was ethics: "whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."

A. Continuous Miracles

God broke the laws of nature in order to sustain His people in the wilderness. This should persuade all men to obey God. God had fed Israel miraculously with manna. In the midst of their national humiliation, there had been life-giving grace. But that was not all: "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years" (v. 4). Their clothes had not worn out. Their feet had not become swollen. Moses made it clear that God's grace had not been a one-time event. It had been a continuous process for four decades. He reminded them of this because a miracle sustained for decades ceases to be regarded as a miracle. It becomes a familiar aspect of daily life. It seems to be an inherent part of the environment, but it

isn't. Men expect benefits in this life. When these benefits are continual, men regard them as normal.

This law was not a land law. It related to Israel's wandering, but its intent was man's universal obedience: "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." Jesus cited this law to Satan in the famous stones-into-bread temptation (Matt. 4:4).[1] It is clearly a cross-boundary law, which means that it is still binding under the New Covenant.[2]

A miracle is abnormal. It is a supernatural act of deliverance or blessing which disrupts the normal pattern of events. But the normal pattern of events is itself a manifestation of grace, beginning with life itself. This grace need not imply God's favor; it is nevertheless *an unmerited gift* to men and angels, both fallen and unfallen.[3] Both historical continuity and discontinuity are acts of God's grace. The former is so continuous—a series of life-sustaining acts strung together infinitesimally close—that its gracious character is perceived only through faith, which in turn is an initially discontinuous event that through self-discipline is supposed to become continuous.

The miracles of the wilderness era were so continuous that they took on the appearance of common grace. Moses reminded Israel of the special position which the nation had in God's eyes, as proven by their patch-free clothing. God had actively intervened in history to sustain them in preparation for the promised day of judgment. The day of judgment is a day of sanctions, positive and negative, depending on one's covenantal status. The day of negative sanctions was about to arrive inside the boundaries of Canaan. For the Israelites, this would bring the promised inheritance. For the Canaanites, this would bring the promised disinheritance; their cup of iniquity was at long last full (Gen. 15:16).[4]

---

1. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 1.

2. On cross-boundary laws, see Appendix J.

3. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 2.

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

B. The Second Law of Thermodynamics

I have written a book on the apologetic uses and misuses—mostly misuses—of the second law of thermodynamics.[5] I wrote it for two reasons: (1) to refute a socialist propagandist who had presented a defense of state economic planning in terms of the need to reduce entropy; (2) to refute modern Creation Science insofar as the second law has been invoked to thwart the construction of an explicitly creationist social theory. In both cases, the theorists have misused the second law of thermodynamics.

The first law of thermodynamics is called the law of the conservation of energy. It states that the total energy of the universe—a supposedly closed system—does not change. Potential energy may become kinetic (changing) energy, but total energy does not change. Modern physics is built on this law. The condition described by the first law of thermodynamics is one reason why there can never be a perpetual motion machine. It would have to produce more usable energy (work) than it began with. It would have to do its work and then re-supply itself with an amount of potential energy equal to or greater than it expended in doing the work. This is sometimes called a perpetual motion machine of the first kind.

The second law of thermodynamics states that in a closed system, potential energy can become kinetic energy, but kinetic energy—energy transformed—cannot become potential energy. Therefore, the energy available for usable work declines over time (classical thermodynamics). As an example, temperature moves from hot to cold, but it does not move from cold to hot unless external heat is applied. Another example: a brick may fall from a wall to the ground, but it will not rise from the ground to the wall unless additional energy is added to the process from outside the system, such as someone who lifts it. Put chronologically, time does not move backward. Contemporary humanism teaches that from the moment just after the Big Bang until that frozen waste called the heat death of the universe, energy is dissipated.[6] Sir Arthur Eddington named this one-way process of energy dissipation through time: *time's arrow*.

The idea of time's arrow creates a serious cosmological problem for evolutionists. Time's arrow proceeds from order to disorder, whereas

5. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

6. But will electrons quit moving? Will atoms still be there? Does the second law apply to subatomic realm?

evolution's arrow supposedly moves from less order to greater order: from the simple to the complex. These two processes have yet to be reconciled by means of an appeal to the thermodynamic laws governing the universe as a closed system.

In any physical process—potential energy to kinetic energy—there will always be heat loss or heat dispersion, also described as an increase in randomness, within a closed system (statistical thermodynamics). This loss of coherence is sometimes called *entropy*. Entropy is a measure of the increase in randomness. The work performed by a machine is a one-time event. The energy has been dissipated, some of it into heat loss. In a machine without oil or some other lubricant, the grinding of metal is audible to all: heat is being produced and then dissipated. There is no lubricant in nature that can overcome all of this heat loss. This is entropy's law. This is a second reason why there can be no perpetual motion machine: heat loss. The machine cannot regain all of the energy expended in work because some of that kinetic energy is lost through heat dispersion.

Perpetual clothing is the equivalent of a perpetual motion machine. This passage proves that, in principle, a perpetual motion machine is possible, but it takes supernatural resource inputs to make it run. The system—nature—is not closed all of the time. Whenever it is closed, however, clothing always wears out through friction. Everything wears out. Feet swell and then wear out. People attached to feet wear out. This is the second law of thermodynamics at work. Where work is performed in a closed system—no new infusions of energy or anything else from outside—the second law guarantees that there is a permanent loss of potential energy, so that some day, potential energy will dissipate—become random—and cease to perform any work. The universe eventually will go into permanent retirement, sometimes called the heat death of the universe. This is inevitable, unless . . . unless the second law of thermodynamics is violated by what is known in Christian circles as the final judgment, or unless the second law of thermodynamics is violated by miracles, or unless the second law of thermodynamics is not actually a law but merely a familiar process regionally and temporally that is not in fact universal. Most physicists regard it as universal,[7] which is why most physicists: (1) deny any final judgment other than the impersonal heat death of the universe; (2) deny the existence of miracles.

Once you admit the existence of miracles that are generated and

7. They are not equally sure regarding the subatomic realm.

sustained from outside the system of the universe, you thereby deny the universality of the second law of thermodynamics. If the universe is an open system, then the second law need not always apply. Unless you see God as a kind of energy pipeline operator who siphons off useful energy from other parts of the universe in order to overcome the negative effects of entropy in this region of the universe, you must regard miracles as a violation of the second law. To define miracles as consistent with the second law, you would have to explain the patch-free clothing of the Israelites as having caused a loss of potential energy somewhere else in the immense closed system called the universe. "Entropy still ruled in the wilderness, but its effects on Israelite clothing were offset by God, who drained off potential energy from some other region." Ultimately, this strictly physical approach to miracles would force Christians to explain the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ in terms of permanently lost potential energy. Then they must search for the existence of a heat sink into which wasted energy was dispersed.

C. In the Garden of Eden[8]

Adam had a nose. He had a sense of smell. But what was there to smell? The fragrance of flowers is a product of the second law of thermodynamics: the move from order to disorder. The millions of tiny particles that activate our sense of smell are distributed randomly, which is why we smell them rather than step in them. They do not pile up.

Consider another example. What if Adam had wanted to build an internal combustion engine? Without a carburetor, the liquid known as gasoline would not power an automobile except in one fiery propulsion event. The carburetor breaks up the liquid into tiny droplets and distributes them randomly in a heat chamber where these particles can be ignited safely by an electric spark. Were it not for the second law of thermodynamics, there would be only one explosion, not thousands per minute.

What if Adam had wanted to play a friendly game of solitaire? He would have pulled out a deck of cards and shuffled them. No cheating here! Shuffling a deck of cards makes the order of the cards unpredictable. Why? Because their order has moved toward randomness. Why? Because of the second law of thermodynamics.

8. This section is based on "Entropy in the Garden of Eden," *Is the World Running Down?,* pp. 124–26.

This means that the second law of thermodynamics operated before the Fall of man. This was admitted once by Henry M. Morris, who elsewhere built his apologetic for creationism on the second law. In an essay addressed primarily to scientists rather than the general Christian public, he made this statement regarding the operation of the second law in Eden: "The formal announcement of the second law in its post-Fall form is found in Genesis 3:17–20. . . . Thus, as best we can understand both Scripture and science, we must date the establishment of the second law of thermodynamics, in its present form at least, from the tragic day on which Adam sinned. . . ."[9] To speak of the "second law in its post-Fall form" and "in its present form at least" is an unobjectionable way to discuss the second law. It suggests that we must distinguish the pre-Fall and post-Fall operations of the second law. This implies that we should distinguish a cursed from an uncursed operation of that law. *We live in a* ***cursed-entropy*** *world, not an* ***entropy-cursed*** *world*. But, as far as I am aware, nowhere else in his writings did Morris discuss the implications of this distinction, nor do his colleagues in the Creation Science movement. This is a major weakness in that movement. A discussion of entropy prior to Adam's Fall is long overdue in Creation Science—so overdue that I suspect that a full discussion would raise objections to the ways in which the movement has used the second law in the past, as well as the ways in which the members of the movement have refused to use it.

The correct use of the second law of thermodynamics in Christian apologetics mandates tight constraints. To argue that the world is running down because of entropy is incorrect. Prior to Adam's rebellion, the second law of thermodynamics operated in a world that was in no way running down. The second law today operates differently from the way it did in Eden. That is, the *physical effects* of the second law of thermodynamics were in some fundamental way changed by God after the Fall of man. These effects have been *cursed*.

Entropy is a fact of life, like death and taxes. Prior to the Fall of man, it was equally a fact of life, before death and taxes had appeared. Despite entropy's cursed effects, we can and should work to achieve longer life spans and lower taxes. The Bible prophesies a future era of longer life spans (Isa. 65:20).[10] Why not lower taxes to match?

9. Henry M. Morris, "Thermodynamics and Biblical Theology," in Emmett L. Williams (ed.), *Thermodynamics and the Development of Order* (Norcross, Georgia: Creation Research Books, 1981), pp. 129–30.

10. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 15.

Why not reductions in entropy? Entropy is a cost. We can find ways of lowering costs. Motor oil reduces metallic friction and therefore reduces entropy. With respect to entropy's economic costs, they have been steadily reduced since the Industrial Revolution. That entropy exists, there can be no doubt, although if it operates in the subatomic realm, it has not yet manifested itself. That entropy, as a cost of production, can have significant effects on a particular social order is also not doubted. But that a serious social theory can be constructed in terms of entropy as an ever-growing social cost is highly doubtful, as leftist Jeremy Rifkin's failed attempt indicates. He ceased writing about entropy within few years after he announced it as a major intellectual breakthrough, substituting time-management as the culprit of capitalism.[11]

D. Continuity and Discontinuity

The Christian's case against Darwinian evolution can be based on the second law of thermodynamics only on the unstated assumption that today's universe is not governed by the physical laws of the pre-Fall universe. The Christian must be very careful how he uses the second law. He cannot accurately say that entropy did not exist in Eden, because it did operate there. Pollen's move from an ordered to a disordered (random) state—entropy—was what activated Adam's sense of smell. What was missing in Eden was hay fever, not entropy. Entropy was not cursed before the Fall; today it is. But this is not how modern defenders of Creation Science usually state their case. They state it incorrectly, as if the second law of thermodynamics did not operate prior to the Fall. They do not distinguish between the uncursed and cursed *effects* of the second law; instead, they distinguish between a world before the second law was imposed by God and today's fallen world under its despotic rule. They argue that the second law came into existence as a result of God's curse. Morris writes: "This law states that all systems, if left to themselves, tend to become degraded or disordered. . . . This, then, is the true origin of the strange law of disorder and decay, universally applicable, all-important second law of thermodynamics. Herein is the secret of all that's wrong with the world. Man is a sinner and has brought God's curse on the earth."[12]

11. North, *Is the World Running Down?*, Appendix F: "Time for a Change: Rifkin's 'New, Improved' Worldview."

12. Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (San Diego, California: Creation-Life, 1976), p. 127.

In 1982, he wrote: "It is well to be reminded that the two greatest laws of science—the universal principles of conservation and decay—are merely the scientific formulations of, first, God's completed and conserved work of creation, and second, His curse on the creation because of sin."[13] It is as if he had forgotten his properly qualified statement in 1981: "The formal announcement of the second law *in its post-Fall form* is found in Genesis 3:17–20. . . . Thus, as best we can understand both Scripture and science, we must date the establishment of the second law of thermodynamics, *in its present form at least*, from the tragic day on which Adam sinned. . . ."[14] Morris' inaccurate formulation of the second law is widely cited in creationist circles, where it is invoked repeatedly in the apologetic against Darwinism. Hardly anyone knows about his correct formulation, which would force creationists to qualify this apologetic and thereby weaken it rhetorically, though strengthen it logically.

Invoking the second law of thermodynamics is a strictly negative apologetic tactic, and, as we shall see, it falls on deaf humanist ears. The Christian uses this argument to refute a Darwinist's assertion that ours is the only world there has ever been or will ever be. The Christian says: "If this really is the only world there has ever been, then the second law of thermodynamics tells us that things could not have evolved from less order to more order. Entropy denies Darwinism." To which the faithful Darwinian replies: "But the second law applies only to closed systems, and the earth is not a closed system." The proper Christian response is: "Then how did the universe itself evolve from disorder to order?" To which the no longer faithful Darwinian responds: "In the nanosecond of the Big Bang, when the second law did not apply."

The Darwinist must invoke *cosmic discontinuity*—the evolutionist's equivalent of the Bible's doctrine of creation out of nothing—in order to secure the present continuity of nature's evolutionary processes. Many leading Darwinists have now capitulated to discontinuity: *punctuated equilibrium*, physically unexplainable, extremely rapid, comprehensive biological transformations of entire species.[15] But this does not shake their faith in the naturalism of the laws of evolution,

13. Henry M. Morris, *Evolution in Turmoil* (San Diego, California: Creation-Life, 1982), p. 174.

14. Morris, "Thermodynamics and Biblical Theology" (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 129–30. Emphasis added.

15. The main proponent in the United States was Harvard University paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, who died in 2002.

any more than the existence of miracles shakes the Christian's faith in the universality of the laws of thermodynamics. Each side explains the existence of exceptions to the not-quite universal laws of thermodynamics in terms of its respective presuppositions regarding the origins of the universe. Neither side is willing to admit that the universe has been governed by the second law of thermodynamics throughout history: from either the garden of Eden or the Big Bang.

The Christian's legitimate apologetic use of the second law of thermodynamics is therefore extremely limited in scope: to force the Darwinist to abandon uniformitarianism, i.e., the original Darwinian doctrine that the processes of nature that we observe today have always been operational. This doctrine is what provided the pre-Darwinian geologists with their evolutionary time scale, which was crucial to their denial of the accuracy of Genesis 1. The discovery of what John McPhee called "deep time" led to the next intellectual revolution: Darwinism.[16] Darwin adopted Hutton's and Lyell's uniformitarian geology before he restructured biology.[17] But rare is the contemporary Darwinist who is silenced by the uniformitarian argument for cosmic continuity. He is willing to invoke cosmic discontinuities whenever convenient, now that he and his peers have agreed that Darwin's continuity-based arguments have permanently shoved the Bible's God out of the universe and out of men's thinking. Having made such effective epistemological and cultural use of Darwinian continuity, evolutionists today feel secure in invoking discontinuity whenever convenient, in much the same way that the creationists invoke miracles. Punctuated equilibrium—unexplainably huge discontinuities in macro-evolution—is modern Darwinism's equivalent of the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea.

Darwinists want their cosmic miracles to be impersonal, so as to avoid considering God's final judgment. They want final judgment to be the impersonal eternal heat death of the universe long after they and everything else has died, not the highly personal eternal flames of the lake of fire. In contrast, Christians want their historical miracles to be personal, long before everything has died, in order to invoke God's final judgment. They want to escape the meaninglessness of the impersonal heat death of the universe in order to believe in the

16. McPhee was quoted by Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow/Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 2.

17. Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 182–84.

meaningfulness of God's highly personal judicial declaration, "Not guilty!"

E. Is the Social World Running Down?[18]

Those who invoke the second law as an argument against Darwinism are almost always premillennialists. Most of the others are amillennialists. As pessimillennialists, they also are highly tempted to argue that the social order is analogous to the physical order. It, too, is visibly running down. Nothing can restore it except: (1) the premillennial return of Jesus Christ to set up an earthly millennial kingdom (where the second law will be annulled or else overcome by regular miracles); (2) the amillennial return of Christ at the final judgment (after which the second law will be annulled).

Not many pessimillennialists go into print on this point. In a flyer produced by the Bible-Science Association and the Genesis Institute (same address), we read the following: "The creationist realizes that the world is growing old around him. He understands that things tend to run down, to age, to die. The creationist does not look for the world to improve, but to crumble slowly—as in erosion, decay, and aging."[19] This is a philosophy of self-conscious defeat, a cry of cultural despair. It is also not the kind of philosophy that anyone would normally choose to challenge socialists or other humanists.

1. Social Entropy

The whole idea of social entropy as an aspect of physical entropy is wrong-headed. First, the entropic process of cosmic physical decay takes place in humanistic time scales of billions of years. Such a time scale is irrelevant for social theory, whether Christian or pagan. Societies do not survive for billions of years—not so far, anyway.

Second, what does it mean to say "the world will [or will not] improve"? What world? The geophysical world? What does an ethical or aesthetic term such as "improve" have to do with the physical world? Scientific evolutionists have been careful to avoid such value-laden adjectives with respect to historical geology or biology, at least with respect to the world prior to mankind's appearance. Without a moral evaluator, says the Darwinist, there can be no meaning for the word "improve."

---

18. This section is based on *Is the World Running Down?*, ch. 3: "Entropy and Social Theory."

19. *What's the Difference? Creation/Evolution?* (no date), p. 2.

Christians should be equally careful in their use of language. The Christian should argue that *God evaluates* any improvement or degeneration in the external world, and therefore men, acting as God's subordinates, also make such evaluations. But there is no autonomous *impersonal* standard of "world improvement," as any evolutionist readily admits. So, the flyer apparently had as its point of reference not the geophysical world but rather *man's social world*.

The flyer says that things tend to run down. "Evolution demands that things 'wind up' even as we see them run down. Therefore the evolutionist looks for things to improve." This implies that Christians should not look for things to improve. Again, what do we mean by "improve"? If things only *tend* to run down, this implies that *sometimes* things *don't* run down. If so, then there must be decay-offsetting progressive forces in operation. What might these be? The main one is the gospel of salvation. Regeneration restores ethical wholeness to men. Another offsetting factor is obedience to the law of God. God's law enables men to rebuild a cursed world. In other words, *ethics is fundamental; entropy isn't*. This is why entropy, to the extent that any such phenomenon applies to the affairs of men, is only a tendency.

The reason why I keep citing this short document (tract) is because it is the one creationist document I have seen that even mentions social theory, and even then only vaguely. I would have been happy to consider other documents from Creation Scientists that deal with entropy in relation to social theory, but I have been unable to find any. In 1988, I searched the complete set of the *Creation Social Sciences and Humanities Quarterly* and found nothing on the topic. There is zero interest in this topic in modern evangelicalism. There is almost as little interest in the relationship between creationism and the social sciences. By 1895, 36 years after the publication of *Origin of Species*, Darwinism had captured virtually every academic field. By 1994, 33 years after the publication of Morris and Whitcomb's *Genesis Flood*, this thin quarterly magazine ceased publication. It had been published for 16 years. It never had more than 600 subscribers. It never reviewed *Is the World Running Down?*, despite the fact that its main author, Ellen Myers, was for years on ICE's mailing list. It occasionally would reprint something I had written, but not on the topic of entropy. (Its partial archives are on the Web.)[20] My book was never reviewed in any Creation Science publication that I ever saw. It went down the memory hole. The book was a self-conscious frontal assault on the movement's

20. http://www.creationism.org/csshs.

use of the second law, yet the movement's leaders pretended that it did not exist. Pretense that a major criticism has never been offered is a convenient institutional strategy, but it does not answer the criticism. It merely keeps one's followers in the dark. This is a high-risk strategy for any movement that presents itself to the world and to its followers as both academic and intellectually valid.

Why this silence on social theory? It may be that the entropy paradigm is so powerful that six-day creationists have become pessimistic about the possibility of constructing the foundations of a self-consciously biblical social science. Perhaps they have been baffled by some variation of this question: "If entropy is the dominant factor in life, how can there be progress in social institutions, including the family and the institutional church?" The answer that I offer is simple: both the resurrection and bodily ascension of Jesus Christ have made possible the historical overcoming of many of the *cursed* aspects of entropy in the physical universe, and to whatever extent that entropy-related curses affect social institutions, these effects can be offset even more rapidly than in the physical realm. Why? Because the three main institutions of society—family, church, and state—are covenantal. Point four of the biblical covenant model—sanctions[21]—offers legitimate hope in comprehensive healing in history. This healing is both personal and institutional.[22] The closer we get to man, who is made in God's image, the more the covenant's sanctions of blessings and cursings become visible.

2. Pessimillennialism and Entropy

I suspect that there is a better explanation for pessimillennialists' silence on social theory. It is not that pessimillennialists became paralyzed in their development of social theory by the power of the concept of entropy. Rather, it is the other way around: *their pessimillennialism has governed their use of the concept of entropy*. Their inherently pessimistic social theory has led to a particular application of the entropy concept: the denial of entropy in the pre-Fall world. They see physical entropy much as they see the social world: inherently debilitating rather than cursed in its effects. They see entropy as the dominant factor in a physical world governed by physical decay; they

21. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4.

22. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

see disorder as the dominant factor in a social world governed by moral decay. They see isolated islands of physical order in a world of escalating physical disorder; they see isolated islands of social order in a world of escalating social and moral decay. They view the physical universe as declining into oblivion apart from occasional miracles; they see history as declining into oblivion apart from rare events of individual salvation. The physical world must march toward physical chaos until God calls the process to a halt at the final judgment. The social world must also march toward social chaos until God calls the process to a halt at the final judgment. In neither case does the New Testament doctrine of Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God play any theoretical role. In both cases, the Old Testament's curses are left unaffected by the New Testament's blessings. In both cases, the Old Testament's tale of rebellion and destruction is dominant. In neither case does New Testament biblical theology play any role. The New Testament's message of comprehensive redemption—the Great Commission[23]—is denied in the name of the Old Covenant's pre-ascension setbacks.

When I published *Is the World Running Down?* I did not expect Creation Scientists to respond to it in print. I was correct; almost no one did. More to the point, no one in the movement has ever written a book on entropy and social theory. Mine remains the only Christian book that deals with the subject, which minimizes the connections between physical entropy and social entropy. I admit freely that physical entropy imposes costs on production processes, but the key question is social: Which social order best encourages the discovery and implementation of technological reductions in these costs? Creation Scientists do not bother to ask this question. The Creation Science movement has not produced a single social theorist since *The Genesis Flood* appeared in 1961. This is ominous for the Creation Science movement. It means that the movement's attempt to reconstruct modern natural science has not only failed to persuade the vast majority of natural scientists, it has persuaded no social scientists. Why is this ominous? Because the success of Darwinism can be measured by its penetration of all other academic fields within a single generation.

As I said earlier, three decades after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the worldwide intellectual community had become overwhelmingly Darwinian. In almost every academic discipline in

23. Kenneth Gentry, *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

the social sciences and the humanities, Darwinists had laid totally new intellectual foundations; each field had been totally reconstructed to conform to Darwinism. By 1890, the Progressive Movement in the United States was ready to restructure civil government and social theory, including theology, in terms of the Darwinian ideal of scientific central planning.[24] So were Progressivism's cousins in Europe, the Social Democrats. The absence of any similar effort, let alone success, among Creation Science's adherents outside of the natural sciences, indicates that there is either something missing in or radically wrong with the movement's entropy apologetic. This was one of my main themes in *Is the World Running Down?*: the incompatibility of Creation Science's entropy apologetic with biblical social theory. Our physical world is not a closed system; neither is our social world. God intervenes in nature and history. He intervened in the corporate life of Israel during the wilderness period, overcoming entropy in the area of apparel.

3. Pessimillennialism and Social Theory

I argue that the Creation Science movement has a hidden but widely shared eschatological agenda: pessimillennialism. Dispensational premillennialists and amillennialists want to believe that the social world must continue to deteriorate alongside the physical world, and a whole lot faster. They accept what might be called "the uniformitarianism of social deterioration." Evil is always compounding in such a view. This steady increase in evil is fast approaching that point on the social graph when the curve will turn sharply upward and begin to approach infinity as a limit: the exponential curve. In other words, pessimillennialists believe that things will soon get so bad socially that Jesus will just have to come again in person to straighten everything out by force. This time of exponential social evil is almost upon us; therefore, they conclude, the Second Coming is just around the corner. They believe that there is not enough time remaining to reverse this process of deterioration. Furthermore, there is no possibility of doing so: social entropy is as universal as physical entropy is. No long-term reversal of social entropy is compatible with the entropy apologetic. The institutional church is seen as socially impotent; the gospel is seen as exclusively personal; and fulfilling the Great Commission is seen as an impossible dream.

24. Sidney Fine, *Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State: A Study of Conflict in American Thought, 1865–1901* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956), Part 2.

Until Creation Science begins to have an impact on social thought, it will be unable to counteract Darwinism, which long ago reconstructed social theory in its own image. The presuppositions underlying modern biological evolution appeared first in the social theories of the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment, not in the natural sciences.[25] Then, after 1880, the free market social theory of pre-Darwinian evolutionism was abandoned; replacing it was reform Social Darwinism: state planning. Evolutionistic social theory laid the foundations of biological Darwinism, just as pessimillennialism laid the foundations of Creation Science's entropy apologetic. Until the eschatological agenda of Creation Science is openly discussed, Creation Science will continue to be irrelevant outside of the natural sciences. Until pessimillennialism is abandoned by Creation Science, Creation Science will continue to be irrelevant in the area of social theory. Pessimillennialism makes impossible the development of a specifically biblical social theory.[26]

Premillennialists presumably believe in "universal social entropy." But there is neither a formula governing social entropy nor any way scientifically to identify or measure this supposed phenomenon, unlike physical entropy. Premillennialists implicitly assume that this universal social entropy will be reversed or offset during the future millennium. They do not say this explicitly, however. Premillennialists refuse to discuss the topic of entropy's operations during the coming millennium. Perhaps they choose not to think about such matters; in any case, they refuse to write about them. Henry M. Morris ignored the topic in his commentary on the Book of Revelation. He said that entropy will be repealed after the final judgment,[27] but he was conveniently silent with respect to entropy during the millennial kingdom.

Most premillennialists believe that things will no longer decline morally and socially during the millennium.[28] Presumably, premillennialists also believe that the effects of physical entropy will somehow

25. F. A. Hayek, "The Results of Human Action but not of Human Design" (1967), in Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), ch. 6; S. S. Schweber, "The Origin of the Origin Revisited," *Journal of the History of Biology*, X (1977), pp. 229–316.

26. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

27. Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1983), p. 441.

28. An exception is accountant-turned-theologian Dave Hunt. See Hunt, *Beyond Seduction: A Return to Biblical Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1987), p. 250. For a critique, see *Is the World Running Down?*, pp. 257–63.

be offset during the millennium. They never discuss this, and so I cannot know for sure what they believe on this point. I doubt that they do, either. On the one hand, if entropy's effects will be offset cosmically, then the millennium will constitute one gigantic miracle. On the other hand, if entropy's effects will be offset *at a price* by normal scientific and technological progress, then we can in theory do the same thing now without the bodily return of Jesus to rule from Jerusalem or Colorado Springs or wherever He will set up headquarters. In either case, entropy is not a permanently debilitating factor in social organizations. Either a series of miracles will offset it, as took place in the wilderness era, or mankind's efforts in reducing costs will offset it.

Amillennialists see no permanent future reversal of social decline in history; a better day is not coming on this side of the Second Coming. In this sense, amillennialists are what Rushdoony once said they are: premillennialists without earthly hope.

Neither of these pessimillennial creationist groups sees any advantage in devoting time and money to a study of biblical social theory. Why bother? Isn't everything is going to hell in an entropic handbasket? Isn't everything doomed? Wouldn't any investment of time and money in developing a creationist social theory constitute a waste of scarce economic resources, like polishing brass on a sinking ship?

Moses had an answer for such rhetorical questions: *no!*

Conclusion

A very clever professor of engineering once stated a specific form of the second law of thermodynamics: "Confusion (entropy) is always increasing in society. Only if someone or something works extremely hard can this confusion be reduced to order in a limited region. Nevertheless, this effort will still result in an increase in the total confusion of society at large."[29] If knowledge were the product of physical creation—or if life were—then his theorem would be correct in this sin-cursed (but not entropy-cursed) world. But Moses' account of the wilderness indicates that life is not strictly physical. Other laws apply. It is worth noting that the famous physicist, Erwin Schrödinger, insisted that life is governed by laws different from those established by modern physical theory. In his book, *What Is Life?*, he wrote: "What I wish to make clear in this last chapter is, in short, that from all we

29. W. L. Everitt, Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois. Cited in Paul Dickenson, *The Official Rules* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), p. 48.

have learnt about the structure of living matter, we must be prepared to find it working in a manner that cannot be reduced to the ordinary laws of physics."[30]

To persuade Israel that promise precedes law, and therefore that grace precedes law, Moses reminded them of their experience in the wilderness. God had overcome the laws of nature by feeding them with manna and by keeping their clothing from wearing out. In modern terminology, God had suspended the second law of thermodynamics. Entropy in these areas had been reduced to zero. There had been neither wear nor tear on their clothing.

This was miraculous. Moses expected Israel to understand this. God's active intervention into the processes of nature had been continuous for four decades. He had overturned the laws of nature in order to humble the Israelites without killing them. To keep them both humble and alive in the wilderness as a test of their covenantal commitment, He had performed a series of miracles that constituted one long miracle. They had passed the test. Now, Moses was telling them, God would secure the long-promised kingdom grant for them through military conquest. But their continued covenantal corporate obedience would be required by God in order for the nation to maintain this kingdom grant.

This Mosaic world-and-life view offers hope for society. Whenever men remain covenantally faithful through obedience to God's Bible-revealed laws, social progress is not only possible, it is assured. God's kingdom grant was given to the church by Jesus after His resurrection: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18b–20).[31] This kingdom grant was sealed by His ascension in history. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:12–14).

30. Erwin Schrödinger, *What Is Life? The Physical Aspect of the Living Cell* (Cambridge University Press, [1944] 1967), p. 81.

31. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 48.

The Great Commission will be fulfilled prior to the final judgment: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:24–28).[32] The termination of entropy's curse will coincide with the termination of death: the last enemy to be subdued. No more worn out clothes and no more swollen feet: what was in the wilderness evermore shall be, world without end, amen.

32. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 16.

19

CHASTENING AND INHERITANCE

> *Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the* LORD *thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the* LORD *thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the* LORD *thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:5–7

The theocentric focus of this passage is stated in the passage: God as the chastener of His son, Israel. He brings sanctions in terms of biblical law. "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him."

A. Israel as God's Son

Israel's judicial position as God's adopted son was the basis of both types of corporate sanctions: positive (Promised Land) and negative (chastening). The proof of God's negative sanctions would be Israel's imminent inheritance of the Promised Land: the disinheritance of the Canaanites.

This was not a seed law.[1] Its intent was universal: "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him" (v. 6).

Deuteronomy follows Numbers, the book of sanctions.[2] Moses here told Israel that they must obey God's commandments in order to escape His chastening, but also because God was about to lead them into the Promised Land. The covenantal link between historical sanctions and earthly inheritance is as unbreakable as the link between

1. On seed laws, see Appendix J.

2. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012).

God's revealed law ("commandments") and sanctions ("chastening"). Put another way, the covenantal link between historical sanctions and eschatology is as fixed as the covenantal link between law and historical sanctions. Put a third way, historical sanctions are the covenantal link between law and eschatology. Put comprehensively, theonomy is not simply a matter of God's law; it is a matter of the covenant: God's absolute sovereignty, man's subordinate authority, Bible-revealed law's continuity, historical sanctions' predictability, and postmillennialism. Put as a slogan, *theonomy is a package deal*.

"Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee." This warning affirmed the legal status of Israel as the son of God. More than this: Israel was God's firstborn son. "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Ex. 4:22–23). As the firstborn son, Israel was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance (Deut. 21:15–17).[3] This reflected the greater responsibility of the firstborn son in representing the father and the covenant line. The firstborn was supposed to declare his father's word to the younger sons. The younger sons would grow up under the authority of the firstborn son. His authority was psychologically derived from his age, but it was judicially derived from his status as heir. The heir spoke his father's word authoritatively.

This placed an added responsibility on Israel's shoulders to declare God's commandments to the gentiles. Judicially speaking, the gentiles were the younger sons.[4] They were not to speak authoritatively to Israel; the opposite was true. This was why God raised up Jonah as a prophet to bring God's covenant lawsuit against Nineveh.

The Promised Land was Israel's double portion. Deuteronomy 8 devotes considerable space to a detailed description of the manifold blessings of the Promised Land (vv. 7–13). There was to be no question in their minds that this constituted a double portion. This was the preferred land. It was not then the barren, parched land that it is today. It was still a land where a ram could get its horns caught in the branches of a thicket on top of a mountain (Gen. 22:13). Today, the mountains of Palestine are barren.[5]

3. Chapter 49.

4. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 37:D.

5. This created a major cinematic problem for the movie Abraham, filmed in Israel and starring Richard Harris. The mountain top scene where Isaac was to be sacrificed

Israel was required to obey God's commandments as a representative son. Israel was under the covenant. In order to declare the covenant authoritatively, a person must be under the terms of the covenant. To remind them that they were under these terms, Moses warned them of God's chastening. There had been negative sanctions imposed on national Israel for her disobedience. These sanctions testified to Israel's status as a son. Chastening was a negative sanction intended to restore the father-son personal relationship. It was not a sanction designed to beat down and destroy. It was not the permanent negative historical sanction that God demanded that Israel impose on the inhabitants of Canaan.

Israel's status as a firstborn son reveals why God told Israel to destroy Canaan. The Canaanites were second-born sons of God: disinherited sons. They were occupying the inheritance of the firstborn son. But why did this give Israel the right to kill them? In the Mosaic law, there was only one case where a family member was authorized to take part in the execution of another family member: when the convicted member had tried to lure the sanctions-bringing member to worship a false God (Deut. 13:6–10).

Canaanites were a threat to Israel because they would eventually lure Israel into false worship. This was the reason that God gave Israel for destroying the Canaanites. The presence of Canaanites in the land would be a constant source of temptation (Ex. 34:11–16). If allowed to remain in the Promised Land, the Canaanites would eventually become bonded to Israel through marriage (Ex. 34:16). As the second-born sons in the household, they would lead Israel into rebellion against the Father. God knew this; so, He announced that He had judged the Canaanites in advance and had found them guilty. Israel had to serve as God's executioner. The firstborn sons and the second-born sons could not occupy the same landed inheritance.

This theme of the inheritance of the firstborn and second-born sons is found repeatedly in Genesis. Again and again, *the firstborn son proved to be the disinherited son*. It began with Adam's rebellion; the inheritance was transferred to God's chronologically second-born son, Jesus Christ.[6] The second-born Son became the firstborn judicially. This theme of the rebellion of the firstborn continued with Cain's

had no way to introduce the ram. The ram just happened to show up and was conveniently captured off-camera by Abraham.

6. Paul established the distinction between the first Adam and the second or last Adam, Jesus Christ: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45).

slaying of Abel. Esau was also the firstborn, but God told Rebekah that the younger would rule the elder (Gen. 25:23). This repeated reversal of the legal pattern of inheritance was based on God's grace in re-inheriting the younger brother through adoption, while condemning the disinherited older brother. The Canaanites as elder brothers had gained possession of the land, but as disinherited sons, their claim was invalid. Israel, by God's grace, had become the firstborn son with lawful title.

B. Suffering and Imposing Negative Sanctions

Moses had already reminded them that God had humbled them in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2).[7] This suffering was a form of chastening. Their suffering was to remind them that they were under the terms of God's covenant as a son. God had already called them to impose His permanent negative historical sanctions on the wilderness side of the Jordan. This had led to the expansion of Israel's inheritance. Reuben (Israel's firstborn), Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh inherited this land (Num. 32:33). This served as a down payment on the national inheritance. God had shown that He would deliver their inheritance to them through military conquest. They were not to fear their enemies.

The four decades of negative sanctions (wandering) were not intended to destroy them but rather to confirm them in the covenant. They were sons, not bastards. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12:6–8). The legal bastards—disinherited sons—were about to be publicly disinherited.

Sonship is by oath consigned. There must be a physical representation of this covenant oath in order for it to become the legal basis of inheritance. The Israelites had not yet been circumcised, which is why they had to be circumcised before they could begin the war to inherit Canaan (Josh. 5:8). Outside of Canaan, they had already begun the conquest, but the actual inheritance of the trans-Jordan lands was delayed until after the defeat of Canaan (Deut. 3:20). The tribes dwelling on the wilderness side of the Jordan also had to be circum-

7. Chapter 18.

cised before lawful title to the inheritance could be legally transferred by God to His firstborn son. Israel's physical suffering at Gilgal was preparatory to the far worse physical suffering of the Canaanites. Israelites had to experience the negative physical sanction of circumcision before they could lawfully impose the negative physical sanction of death inside the boundaries of the Promised Land.

Those who were formally under the God's covenant sanctions were the only people authorized by God to impose negative civil sanctions in Israel. Citizenship is established by oath. Those who seek to impose negative civil sanctions and participate in the political sacrament of voting must first place themselves formally under the terms of the God's two covenants, church and state.[8]

Conclusion

Moses announced the requirement that Israel, as the son of God, was required to keep God's commandments. God had been humbling them for four decades. Now, He was about to bring them into a bountiful land which would be their inheritance. The sequence was as follows: negative sanctions as a means of maturity through chastening, obedience to God's law as an ethical requirement, and inheritance in history. The chastening, while a negative sanction, was in fact confirmation of their legal position as inheriting sons. So, this negative sanction was a form of grace. Once again, we are reminded that grace precedes law. But this passage also indicates that law precedes the transfer of the inheritance in history.[9]

The second-born gentile sons of Canaan had been disinherited by God in Abraham's day: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).[10] This verbally imputed disinheritance—what we might call *definitive* or judicial disinheritance—was to be achieved *progressively*: "I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out

8. This principle of civil law remains covenantally authoritative. It is dishonored in New Testament times by every system of civil government that bases citizenship on anything other than public Trinitarian confession and communing membership in the institutional church.

9. This was true even in Eden. Adam in Eden was supposed to gain experience in obeying God's law before moving outside the garden's boundaries into the world.

10. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land" (Ex. 23:27–30). This disinheritance was to be *finally* achieved in history: "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them" (Deut. 7:1–2).

The covenant's development in history reflects the structure of the covenant: sovereign grace, hierarchical sonship, law, sanctions, and inheritance. The conquest of Canaan, from God's definitive promise to Abraham regarding the inheritance of Abraham's sons to the final defeat and disinheritance of the Canaanites, is representative of all of man's history. While this covenant sequence was always broken by Old Covenant Israel, as represented by the survival of a remnant of Canaanites in the land, the New Covenant sequence moves toward historical fulfillment of this sequence. "For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:9).

20

OVERCOMING POVERTY

> *A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:9

This description of the Promised Land appears in a passage devoted to dominion. It related to Israel's inheritance of the land, but its ethical intention was universal: "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him" (Deut. 8:6).

A. Biblical Scarceness vs. Economic Scarcity

This was not a seed law or land law.[1] It was universal. This description of *a land without scarcity* seems consistent with the sabbatical year of release from debt: "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release; Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it" (Deut. 15:1–4).[2] But it seems inconsistent with Deuteronomy 15:11: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy

1. On seed laws and land laws, see Appendix J.
2. Chapter 35.

brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." God's affirmation that they would eat *bread without scarceness*—the abolition of poverty—did not negate the sabbatical year law, which implied that this law would cease when there was no more poverty in the land. But He also promised that there would always be poverty in the land. How can all this be sorted out biblically?

The word translated here as "scarceness" occurs only once in the Old Testament. It is derived from a Hebrew word, *miskenuth*, meaning poverty, which is found only in Ecclesiastes. "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished" (Eccl. 4:13).[3] "Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard" (Eccl. 9:15–16).[4] *Miskenuth* in turn derives from the Hebrew word translated as "folly": *siklooth*. This word is also confined exclusively to verses in Ecclesiastes, such as in Ecclesiastes 2:13: "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." *Siklooth* is derived from *sawkal'*: silliness. "And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever" (I Sam. 13:13).

By tracing the origins of these words, we see a connection: scarceness, poverty, folly, silliness. The essence of silliness is that men refuse to keep God's commandments, as Samuel told Saul. *Obedience brings wealth*. This is the core meaning of Moses' description of the Promised Land. The land contains a sufficient supply of scarce economic resources to enable a covenant-keeper to eat bread.

This concept is different from the economist's concept of scarcity. The economist defines scarcity in terms of price. At zero price, the demand for a scarce economic resource will be greater than its supply. This was surely not what Moses had in mind: "...a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass" (Deut. 8:9b). Any expenditure of labor is a payment. The copper of Israel was not obtainable apart from labor.[5]

3. Gary North, *Autonomy and Stagnation: An Economic Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 14.

4. *Ibid*., ch. 36.

5. The King James translators always translated the Hebrew word for copper as brass, an alloy of copper and zinc.

The Promised Land was not outside of history and its cursed scarcity. It was a place with sufficient resources that a folly-avoiding person who obeyed God's commandments would not suffer poverty. David observed: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25). *Poverty in Israel would be abnormal for covenant-keepers if Israel remained faithful to God*. This wealth principle was not confined to Mosaic Israel. It is universal.

If the wealth principle is universal, then the question facing all mankind is this: What is the most valuable economic resource? This resource is what all men should seek. The Bible tells us what this resource is. Few men listen. Even fewer seek it.

B. The Ultimate Resource

The ultimate resource is not human creativity, contrary to Julian Simon's book.[6] Rather, it is God's covenant. Not creativity as such but adherence to God's law is what brings forth the positive human creativity that sustains long-term economic growth. Human creativity can sometimes be perverse, and it then brings forth poverty. Warfare is usually a counter-productive endeavor (James 4:1).

Covenant-keeping is the key to wealth. Covenant-keeping is the *wealth formula*. A society does not need physical resources to prosper. It needs personal liberty, a private property order, future-orientation (low time preference), a willingness to work hard and wisely in terms of God's moral standards, a widespread acceptance of the moral legitimacy of commerce and profits, and some way to transport products to and from the world outside. The tiny community of Hong Kong since 1945 has become a formidable economic competitor in several fields, most notably in textiles and financial services. The United States government has long been pressured by American textile and clothing manufacturers to legislate import quotas against clothing exported by this geographically tiny (a little over 400 square miles) society of seven million hard-working people,[7] so competitive are Hong Kong's manufacturers. Hong Kong has almost no natural resources. It has to import at least 90% of everything it consumes. Only one-seventh

6. Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981). The phrase is Drucker's: Peter Drucker, *Landmarks of Tomorrow* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 180.

7. In 1945, about 600,000 lived there. Alvin Rabushka, *Hong Kong: A Study in Economic Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 11.

of its land is arable.[8] Its only natural resource of any consequence is its harbor. Meanwhile, other parts of the world are awash in natural resources, but they are also awash in envy, crime, government regulations on the economy, and present-oriented people who choose not to save. These societies are marked by their poverty.

The land of Israel had many natural resources. It also had access to the Mediterranean Sea. It was "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey" (Deut. 8:8). The threat to Israel's prosperity was not the threat of natural resource depletion. God did not warn them to use civil government coercion to conserve resources. He warned them against forgetting where they had received these resources:

> Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deut. 8:11–14).[9]

Covenantal forgetfulness would eventually produce *covenantal faithlessness*. This would lead to God's corporate negative sanctions against them (vv. 19–20). If they enjoyed the gifts without remembering and worshipping the Giver, then their prosperity would not survive. It was God's covenantal administration that would enable them to prosper in the Promised Land.

C. Land and Labor

The list of resources emphasized agriculture, herding, and mining. These were traditional occupations in the ancient world, along with seafaring, trade, and textiles. The Promised Land's geography offered all of these industries. The economist generally refers to these resources as land.[10] The Promised Land was filled with resources. The Israelites could therefore look forward to prosperity. They were not

8. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

9. Chapter 21.

10. In this technical sense, the sea is land. Because of its liquid status, the sea and rivers present problems for assigning ownership. That which flows is difficult to isolate; that which cannot be isolated is difficult to own and disown. It is this problem which leads to pollution, both liquid and air-borne: using water and air as free resources to reduce production costs.

expected by God to believe in Hong Kong economics: compounding creativity that makes land valuable mainly as a consumer good rather than land that supplies raw materials. Even today, Hong Kong's economic success is almost beyond the willingness of university-educated people to understand, accept, or believe. This was especially true prior to 1980. As Rabushka wrote in 1979, "One can, I think, count the number of American economists who study Hong Kong's political economy on the fingers of one hand, or at most two."[11]

1. Faith in Land

The idea that widespread prosperity can be attained without the natural resource of land is not readily believed. This was especially true before Bill Gates became the richest man in the world at age 30 by owning and improving software code. To go from an investment of $50,000 in 1980[12] to about $500 billion in 1999[13] by means of magnetic ones and zeros embedded on pieces of plastic—plus the ability to persuade millions of buyers that these inexpensive pieces of plastic are useful—would have appeared impossible in 1981. Today, however, creating this kind of personal wealth seems possible *only* by doing highly creative things with magnetic ones and zeros.

Nevertheless, a great deal has changed in people's thinking since 1980. This change accelerated rapidly among the West's intellectual elite after the highly popular (in the Western media, but not in the USSR) Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev publicly admitted the collapse of the Soviet economy in 1989, which in fact had not collapsed at all, since it had never been sufficiently productive to have collapsed. The Soviet Union had always been little more than a Third World country, i.e., dependent on government aid and loans from Western banks. It had an insane economic system, a fact made hilariously clear in Leopold Tyrmand's 1972 book, *The Rosa Luxemburg Contraceptive Cooperative*. Communist nations' poverty had been visible to anyone who visited them with open eyes and no socialist presuppositions,

11. Rabushka, *Hong Kong*, p. 2.

12. The price that Microsoft paid to buy the rights to QDOS from Seattle Computer Products, which Microsoft then sold to IBM for the not-yet-invented IBM-PC. Microsoft retained the rights to license MS-DOS.

13. The imputed value of all Microsoft shares in November, 1999: its market capitalization. By November, 2011, the value was down to $225 billion, with the dollar's purchasing power reduced by 35%. Of course, if existing share holders all tried to sell their shares to get access to cash, the value of the shares would fall dramatically. But Bill Gates for years has been selling off shares constantly, becoming a true multi-billionaire and philanthropist.

i.e., people other than Western intellectuals.[14] What collapsed in 1989 was Western intellectuals' faith in the productivity of the state's direct ownership of the means of production. This collapse was seen within a few months in America's book stores: $24.95 books written by Marxist college professors were being sold in discount bins for a dollar or two. After the official suicide of the USSR on December 31, 1991, such books became very difficult to find except for a few titles in university book stores, where tenured Marxist professors who pretend that their worldview hasn't become a joke, even among their liberal academic colleagues, still assign them.

2. The Wealth Formula

What God told Israel was this: the maintenance of the kingdom grant was conditional. They had to keep God's commandments. He did not tell them that He would miraculously add new supplies of iron and copper if they proved to be obedient. He would multiply them and their flocks. He would multiply their vines. They would get wealthier, step by step. The heart of this system of economic growth was the covenant: law, positive corporate sanctions, and compound economic growth. God gave them the wealth formula. They did not adopt it. This had to wait until the late eighteenth century. When men at long last accepted it, they entered into the world of compound economic growth, where growth in output of two percent per year for two centuries brings personal wealth beyond the dreams of kings in 1800. Computer technology has converted silicon—sand—into wealth beyond anything ever dreamed by the ancient and medieval magicians and alchemists. But the modern world has reversed the covenantal imagery of blessing. "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:17). God views sand as cheap and children as valuable. The modern world sees children as a liability and sand as an asset.[15] This is why the modern world is headed for judgment. A

14. Sylvia R. Margulies, *The Pilgrimage to Russia: The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners, 1924–1937* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

15. The United States Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973. Two years later, beachfront property in southern California began to soar in value even faster than other southern California real estate did. Sand was now seen as being both scarce and desirable. A beach bum's lifestyle—clinging, irritating sand and blinding sun, with its cancer-causing, wrinkle-producing, "skin like leather by age 35" tanning—became the

good, old fashioned plague would change modern man's imputation of economic value. So would the bankruptcy of government-funded pension plans.

D. What the Land Might Lack

Trade is the voluntary, non-coercive means by which a person who has more of some item than he wants, compared to how much he wants what someone else has, is able legally to get ownership of the other person's goods. Each person enters into an exchange believing that he will be better off after the exchange.

This is as true statistically of nations as of individuals. Residents of a nation that lacks some resource can buy it from residents in another nation. For example, in the late 1970s, Hong Kong imported 85% of its food and exported 90% of its manufactures.[16] Meanwhile, some nation grew the food that it sold to Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents wanted food more than extra clothing; the other nation's residents wanted clothing more than extra food. Hong Kong was in effect manufacturing food; its trading partner was in effect growing clothing. The same sort of arrangement categorizes trade between the United States and Japan.[17]

It was not necessary that God fill the Promised Land with every conceivable natural resource. It was only necessary that He give them His law and the grace to obey it, which allows men's creativity to flourish. *Creativity is the basis of economic growth*. Raw materials have always been available. What makes them valuable is men's knowledge of productive, customer-satisfying things to do with them. What makes them worth searching for and digging up is the income potential provided by other men with other things to exchange. He who has the productive skills that produce the finished products that customers desire to buy will not lack anything in whatever land God places him, but only for as long as there is freedom.

---

lifestyle of choice for present-oriented rich people. They became willing to pay extreme price premiums for truly mediocre housing to gain easy access to this unproductive, responsibility-avoiding lifestyle. I grew up in that once middle-income environment, 1953–59, Manhattan Beach, and was happy to leave. In 2011, Manhattan Beach was the most sought-after real estate by the rich in the United States: "Where the Rich Are Moving," CNBC.com. My family had moved away in 1962, selling their two houses for little money.

16. Rabushka, *Hong Kong*, pp. 2–3.

17. See Gary North, "Growing Toyotas, Manufacturing Soybeans," *The Freeman* (Jan. 1993).

Conclusion

The Promised Land was not a land literally flowing with milk and honey. It was a land that possessed great advantages, not the least of which was its location on a widely used trade route. It had minerals. It had room for sheep. It had a climate fit for agricultural production. It had not yet been stripped of its fertility by millennia of ecological exploitation and neglect.

The key to prosperity in the land of Israel was covenantal faithfulness, not government-planned resource conservation. To continue to eat bread without scarceness, Israel would have to avoid the folly of covenant-breaking. The land was bountiful, which was appropriate for an inheritance. But the land was to be understood as a manifestation of God's grace. Subordination follows grace; law follows subordination; sanctions follow law; and an inheritance either multiplies, stagnates, or contracts in terms of men's sanctions and God's. For those who kept the covenant, the land would lack nothing, even as Hong Kong lacks nothing. When a nation is productive, it can buy whatever it does not have. When God said "thou shalt not lack any thing in it," He did not mean that the land contained everything they needed. It would contain the people of the covenant. Covenantal faithfulness, not minerals and climate as such, would enable them to escape the burden of poverty.

21

THE ASSERTION OF AUTONOMY

> *When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the* LORD *thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the* LORD *thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the* LORD *thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:10–17

The theocentric focus of this law is God as the gracious Provider. It has to do with maintaining the kingdom grant: "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day." The issue is law: point three of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. Continually Thanking God

God demands thankfulness on the part of the recipients of His grace. The message here is clear: covenant-keepers can become spiritually

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler Texas: Institute for Christian Economic, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

forgetful as a direct result of the visible blessings of God. As a result of the gift, they forget the Giver. That covenant-breakers forget the God who gave them their blessings should come as no shock, but this warning was directed at covenant-keepers.

Because the sin of covenantal forgetfulness is universal, this law was not a land law or a seed law.[2] Theologians who argue that this law was exclusively a land law want to escape from its implication: God brings sanctions in history against those who forget Him. When they argue that this was a land law that was unique to Mosaic Israel, they strip the covenant of its predictability and therefore also its authority in history. Those who forget God are supposedly in no worse shape in history, and perhaps far better shape, than those who remember Him.[3]

Forgetfulness is an aspect of point two of the biblical covenant model: hierarchy. The covenantally forgetful man forgets something quite specific: his complete dependence on the grace of God. Moses here listed the external blessings that God had given them in the wilderness, a hostile place that would not sustain a large population. They had received water out of the rock and a daily supply of food. In the wilderness, the generation of the conquest had been kept humble and subordinate by their reliance on God's miracles.[4] God would soon give them blessings after they conquered the Promised Land. The transfer of inheritance from Canaan to Israel would be an aspect of God's comprehensive deliverance of the nation out of bondage and into freedom. Their freedom would initially be accompanied by a discontinuous increase in their external wealth: military victory. Then this wealth would multiply.

B. Miracles as Welfare

The move from Egypt to Canaan is a model of the move from slavery to freedom. The model of a free society is not Israel's miraculous wilderness experience, where God gave them manna and removed many burdens of entropy.[5] The predictable miracles of the wilderness era were designed to humble them, not raise them up. The wilderness experience was not marked by economic growth but by economic

2. On land laws and seed laws, see Appendix J

3. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 3: "Halfway Covenant Ethics."

4. Chapter 18.

5. Chapter 18

stagnation and total dependence. They were not allowed to save extra portions of manna, which rotted (Ex. 16:20). On the move continually, they could not dig wells, plant crops, or build houses. At best, they may have been able to increase their herds, as nomads do (Num. 3:45; 20:4; 32:1). The wilderness experience was a means of teaching them that God acts in history to sustain His people. The wilderness economy with its regular miracles was not to become an ideal toward which covenant-keepers should strive. Israel longed for escape from the wilderness. It was God's curse on the exodus generation that they would die in the wilderness.

The wilderness economy was a welfare economy. The Israelites were supplied with basic necessities, even though the people did not work. But they lacked variety. People without the ability to feed themselves were fed by God: same old diet. People without the ability to clothe themselves were clothed by God: same old fashions. Israel wandered aimlessly because the exodus generation had refused to march into war (Num. 14). They were not fit to lead; so, they had to follow. They were welfare clients; they had no authority over the conditions of their existence. They took what was handed out to them. And, like welfare clients generally, they constantly complained that their life style just wasn't good enough (Num. 11).[6] They had been unwilling to pay the price of freedom: conquest. God therefore cursed them to endure four decades of welfare economics. The only good thing about the wilderness welfare program was that it did not use the state as the agency of positive blessings. No one was coerced into paying for anyone else's life style. God used a series of miracles to sustain them all. There was no coercive program of wealth redistribution. Israel was a welfare society, not a welfare state.

The lure of the welfare state remains with responsibility-avoiding men in every era. It was this lure which attracted the crowds to Jesus. "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26). They wanted a king who would feed them. They viewed Jesus as a potential candidate for king because He could multiply bread. They associated free food with political authority. He knew this, so He departed from them (John 6:11–15).

Men in their rebellion against God want to believe in a state that can heal them. They believe in salvation by law. They prefer to live

6. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012), ch. 7.

under the authority of a messianic state, meaning a healer state, rather than under freedom. They want to escape the burdens of personal and family responsibility in this world of cursed scarcity. They want to live as children live, as recipients of bounty without a price tag. They are willing to sacrifice their liberty and the liberty of others in order to attain this goal.

One mark of spiritual immaturity is the quest for economic miracles: stones into bread. The price of this alchemical wealth is always the same: the worship of Satan. "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:3–4).[7] Modern welfare economics teaches that the state can provide such miracles through positive economic policy, i.e., by taking wealth from some and transferring it to others, either directly or through monetary inflation. This belief is the presupposition of the Keynesian revolution, which dominated twentieth-century economic thought, 1936–1990. John Maynard Keynes actually described credit expansion—the heart of his system—as the "miracle . . . of turning a stone into bread."[8]

When Israel crossed into the Promised Land, the identifying marks of their wilderness subordination were removed by God: the manna and their permanent clothing. This annulment of the welfare economy was necessary for their spiritual maturation and their liberation. The marks of their subordination to God would henceforth be primarily confessional and ethical. The only food miracle that would remain in Israel would be the triple crop two years prior to a jubilee (Lev. 25:21).[9] God promised to substitute a new means of Israel's preservation: economic growth. No longer would they be confined to manna and the same old clothing. Now they would be able to multiply their wealth. The zero-growth world of the welfare society would be replaced by the pro-growth world of covenantal remembrance. But then they would forget the source of their economic success.

---

7. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 1.

8. Keynes (anonymous), *Paper of the British Experts* (April 8, 1943), cited in Ludwig von Mises, "Stones into Bread, the Keynesian Miracle," *Plain Talk* (1948), reprinted in Henry Hazlitt (ed.), *The Critics of Keynesian Economics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1960), p. 306.

9. North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, ch. 26.

Conclusion

Moses warned the generation of the conquest that their success in the future will be based on the same crucial factor that had sustained the generation of the exodus: the God of the covenant. God was the source of deliverance. He is the source of the inheritance. He is the source of any continuity of success over time.

Covenant-breaking people do not believe this. Thus, they will be tempted to acknowledge the gift, but forget the giver. They will not attribute their success to random forces. They will attribute it to the might of their own hand, i.e., their autonomy. They will see themselves as the be-all and end-all in history: alpha and omega.

Moses did not warn them here that Israel will worship other gods. That went without saying. Moses repeatedly warned them against idolatry. Here, the issue was different: the source of their wealth. They would someday claim to be the source, not some local deity. They would seek to substitute themselves as the god of covenant sanctions. They would seek to establish a new hierarchy of covenantal authority.

This had been Adam's sin. He would decide who was correct about the results of eating the forbidden fruit: either God or the serpent. The agent with the power of determining the final truth of God's word is either God or a pretender. Moses warned that Adam's act of rebellion would be played out again in the Promised Land. He did not mention Adam, but the sin was the same: claiming to be the source of covenant sanctions. Adam acted as though he thought he would not die. The Israelites would act as though they had produced their wealth autonomously. If there is a central sin of all modern economic thought, this is it: attributing to man and his works the wealth of nations. Free market economists praise individuals, while collectivists praise committees. To man be the glory, Amen.

22

ECONOMIC GROWTH AS COVENANTAL CONFIRMATION

But thou shalt remember the LORD *thy God: for it is he that giveth the power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant with you which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.*

DEUTERONOMY 8:18

The theocentric issue here is the covenant, which is associated with point two of the biblical covenant.[1] Exodus is the second book in the Pentateuch. It is the book of the commandments, which are collectively called the book of the covenant (Ex. 24:7).

Moses prefaced this passage with a prophecy (vv. 1–17). God was about to give them a land of milk and honey. Moses warned them that, as a covenanted nation, they will be tempted to rebel after years of living in the Promised Land. They will be afflicted with covenantal forgetfulness.[2] They will not attribute to God their deliverance from Egypt and their miraculous survival in the wilderness. They will be tempted to assert their autonomy from God by claiming that the might of their hands gave them this wealth (v. 17). This is rebellion: the substitution of a new hierarchy for the original one. It is comparable to Adam's rebellion.

Moses then reminded them of the source of their wealth: God. Their wealth in the Promised Land will be part of a system of covenantal sanctions. They must view their wealth in terms of God's covenant, not the might of their own hands, i.e., autonomy.

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Visiuon, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.
2. Chapter 21.

A. The Power to Get Wealth

This passage is a command: "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (v. 18). This verse is one of the most important verses in the Bible regarding wealth. *Covenantally speaking, this is the Bible's most important verse on the nature and purpose of wealth*. It states that wealth is a means of God's establishment of His covenant.

The covenant is established by grace. God brings covenant-breakers under His covenant through adoption. Israel's adoption by God is the biblical model (Ezek. 16:6–13). Adoption takes place by God's declarative judicial act: God announces His lawful claim on His children. God told Moses: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Ex. 4:22–23). God's claim superseded Pharaoh's false claim of ownership. God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt's bondage was His declaration of a superior claim of jurisdiction. Liberty under God was the alternative to servitude under Pharaoh.

God delivered Israel progressively out of bondage: out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into Canaan. So, the judicial reality of *Israel's definitive liberation* by God was established visibly through *Israel's miraculous deliverance from the burdens of Adam's curse*. Israel survived in the wilderness through a series of miracles: the overcoming of scarcity (manna and water), the overcoming of entropy's curse (wear and tear).[3]

Why the need for progressive deliverance? Why not instant liberation? Moses gave them the answer: their need for humility. God had humbled them in order to prove them (vv. 2, 16). They had not been morally fit to inherit Canaan immediately after their deliverance from Egypt. The first generation was still a nation of slaves. They had the slave's mentality. They could not forget the onions of Egypt (Num. 11:5). They remembered onions and forgot God. This element of covenantal forgetfulness would remain Israel's great temptation until their return from the exile. They kept forgetting that God was the source of their blessings. They kept returning to idolatry.

Their power to get wealth in the Promised Land was analogous to

3. Chapter 18.

their experience of miracles in the wilderness. The wilderness miracles were designed to strengthen their faith in a God who delivers His people in history and who fulfills His promises to His people in history. The problem was this: the continuity of these miracles became a part of Israel's predictable environment. Israel began to take them for granted. Moses twice repeated the fact that God had humbled them in the wilderness (vv. 2, 16). Moses wanted them to understand that the threat of being humbled is always present with the promise of covenantal blessings in history. The wilderness miracles had been designed by God to remind Israel that God was their deliverer. Moses then extended this principle: wealth was to remind them that God is their deliverer.

God delivers men visibly through covenantal blessings. These blessings can be measured: "And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied . . ." (v. 13). What is visible to all testifies to the existence of a covenantal realm of bondage and deliverance that is invisible. This is a manifestation of the covenantal principle of representation (point two): *the visible testifies to the existence of the invisible*. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20a).[4] Jesus' miracles of healing were examples of this principle of representation. They authenticated His messianic office under God (Matt. 9:2–7).

The visible blessings of God in history are to remind men of the blessings of God in eternity. The visible curses of God in history are to remind men of the curses of God in eternity. But in Old Covenant Israel, there were no clear distinctions between eternal negative sanctions and eternal positive sanctions. Not until the last section of the Book of Daniel was the doctrine of the bodily resurrection clearly enunciated (Dan. 12:2–3). The grave seemed to cover all men equally. The distinction between paradise and hell is a New Testament doctrine. So, the focus of Old Covenant's covenantal sanctions was historical.

B. Compound Economic Growth

Moses enunciated here for the first time in recorded history the doctrine of permanent economic growth. In all other ancient societies,

4. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 3.

history was seen as cyclical. Men viewed history much as they viewed nature. The fruitfulness of spring and summer would inevitably be overcome in the fall and winter. The idea of linear history—temporal beginning and end—was not believed, because the covenant-breaking world rejected the *cosmic judicial* basis of linear history: creation, Fall, redemption, and temporal consummation. The twin idols of nature and history were cyclical in covenant-breaking religion. Only the new idol of autonomous philosophy offered some possibility of linear development: the growth of knowledge. But this came late in ancient man's history. Philosophy appeared in Greece at about the time that Israel was sent into exile and ceased worshipping the carved idols of Canaan.

In Israel, the doctrine of compound economic growth (Deut. 8) preceded by nine centuries the doctrine of the bodily resurrection (Dan. 12:2). Moses taught Israel that compound economic growth is possible through covenantal faithfulness. If Israel remembered God as the source of their wealth—an act of covenantal subordination—and continued to obey His law as a nation, then God would shower the nation with even more wealth. *This wealth was designed to confirm the covenant*. God's covenantal blessings and cursings had been visible in the wilderness, Moses reminded them. The curses were designed to humble them, he said. Then what of the prophesied blessings? Moses was equally clear: they were designed to confirm the covenant. God would continue to deal with Israel covenantally, which meant that they could expect visible blessings and visible cursings in terms of their own ethical response to these blessings. Do not forget who provides these blessings when blessings multiply, Moses warned. These external blessings would not be covenantally neutral. They would be signs of the continuing covenantal bond between God and Israel.

Economic growth was an aspect of the Mosaic covenant. There is no biblical indication that this was changed in the New Covenant. *The existence of God's covenant should be recognized in the compounding of wealth*. If visible blessings confirm the covenant over time—a progressive fulfillment—then economic growth is in principle as open-ended as the covenant. The covenant is perpetual; so is the possibility of long-term economic growth. Moses told them that economic growth would not automatically cease because nature is cyclical. History is not cyclical. Economic growth can compound through the seasons because the covenant transcends the seasons.

Sanctification is progressive. The blessings of God are supposed

to compound because the visible confirmation of God's covenant in history is designed to reconfirm the terms of the covenant to each succeeding generation. Each generation is to experience positive feedback: blessings, remembering, obedience, blessings. This process of economic growth is what makes possible an ever-increasing inheritance. God's gracious kingdom grant is progressively appropriated by the heirs through the progressive confirmation of the covenant. The goal is the conquest of the whole earth through conversion and confirmation. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18–20).[5]

C. The Idea of Progress and Inheritance

The ideal of economic growth parallels the idea of progress in history. Moses made it clear that the covenantal faithfulness of Israel was not a static ideal. *History is progressive because corporate sanctification is progressive*. It is not simply that history is linear; it is also progressive. This section of Deuteronomy is important because it sets forth the ideal of progress. God had delivered Israel from bondage. He had led them through the wilderness. Now, in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham, He was about to lead them into the Promised Land. In the Promised Land, they could legitimately expect the multiplication of both their numbers and their wealth. "And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied" (v. 13). This multiplication process is basic to the fulfillment of the dominion covenant given to Adam and Noah. But this process is at bottom covenantal, not autonomous. It is an aspect of God's positive historical sanctions in response to corporate covenantal faithfulness.

1. Linear History and Corporate Sanctification

To sustain corporate progress, two ideas must be widespread in a culture: the idea of *linear history* and the idea of *progressive corporate sanctification*. When the idea of linear history is absent, men do not sustain hope in the future of corporate progress, for progress must

5. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

inevitably be swallowed up in the retrogressive phase of the next historical cycle. The *Great Reversal* will overcome the hopes and dreams of all men. It will cut short every program of social improvement. The discontinuity of reversal will always overcome the continuity of progress.[6] *In short, if history is not linear, the visible inheritance will eventually be destroyed*. The visible distinctions between covenant-breaking societies and covenant-keeping societies will disappear or be made operationally irrelevant by the magnitude of the Great Reversal. Such an outlook requires the following re-writing of the second commandment: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and doing the same unto them that love me, and keep my commandments."

When the idea of progressive corporate sanctification is absent, men do not sustain hope in the either the supposed mechanism or the supposed organicism of progress. Progress is, at best, limited to an elite core of individuals: a matter of inner discipline, secret knowledge, capital accumulation (e.g., money-lending), or mystical retreat from history. When a society loses faith in corporate progress, its citizens lose a major incentive to forego consumption in the present for the sake of greater future income. Men become more present-oriented than people in societies that retain faith in corporate progress. They apply a higher rate of discount (interest) to future income. The rate of economic growth slows as the rate of saving drops. If there is no possibility of sustained covenantal progress based on a distinction between the earthly fate of the wicked vs. the earthly fate of the righteous, then the present consumption of capital is the obvious policy. Solomon summarized this view: "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity. Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun" (Eccl. 8:14–15).[7] In short, *if there is no*

6. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), chaps. 4, 7, 8.

7. Gary North, *Autonomy and Stagnation: An Economic Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), , ch. 31.

visible corporate sanctification, then the visible corporate inheritance will be dissipated.

2. Cyclical History

The pagan ancient world did not have a doctrine of compound economic growth, because it had no doctrine of sustainable corporate progress. J. B. Bury wrote in 1920 that the idea of progress requires faith in the inevitability of mankind's autonomous advancement. This advancement must not be the result of any outside intervention; it must be man's gift to man.[8] It is not sufficient for the development of the idea of progress that men recognize the existence of advancement in the past. The question is this: Must there be inevitable long-term advancement in the future?[9] Belief in progress is an act of faith.[10] Classical Greece did not possess this faith.[11] "But, if some relative progress might be admitted, the general view of Greek philosophers was that they were living in a period of inevitable degeneration and decay—inevitable because it was prescribed by the nature of the universe."[12] As Bury noted, Greek science "did little or nothing to transform the conditions of life or to open any vista into the future."[13] What was true of Greek thought was equally true of every ancient society except Israel.

Science was stillborn in every society in which belief in cyclical history was dominant.[14] Physicist and historian Stanley Jaki presented a series of masterful expositions of the relationship between the Greeks' view of cyclical history and their failure to extend the science they discovered. The Christian ideal of progress made possible the advancement of Western science; it was not Renaissance science that launched the modern idea of progress. Contrary to Ludwig Edelstein,[15] the Greeks did not take seriously the idea of progress, for they believed, among other anti-progress ideas, in the Great Year of the cosmos: the 26,000-year rotation of the heavens, an idea that was denounced by

8. J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Growth and Origin*, rev. ed. (New York: Dover, [1932] 1955), p. 5.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

11. *Idem.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

14. Stanley L. Jaki, *Science and Creation: From Eternal Cycles to an Oscillating Universe*, rev. ed. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986). Cf. Jaki, *The Savior of Science* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1988), ch. 1; *The Only Chaos and Other Essays* (Lanham, Maryland: Academic Press of America, 1990), ch. 5.

15. Ludwig Edelstein, *The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).

several church fathers from Origen to Augustine.[16] Belief in this Great Year was common in many ancient societies. It was important in Platonic thought.[17] Priests and astrologers noticed the precession of the equinoxes.[18] Ancient astronomers knew that every few thousand years, the pole star changes. We know today that the wobbling of the earth's axis is the cause; the earth whirls like a spinning top with an inclined axis. Ancient societies explained this odd movement in terms of the unbalanced rotation of the heavens. The heavens were seen as rotating around the earth as if the stars were part of a system analogous to a broken mill.[19] Paralleling this, classical thought developed the cyclical idea of an original golden age which was followed by degeneration,[20] and which will be followed by a new golden age.

Edelstein saw the documentary evidence of classical optimism as being "widely dispersed"[21]—another phrase for "scattered and unsystematic." He saw the idea as "popular in antiquity," but his presentation of the scattered and fragmentary evidence is insufficient to prove his case. Edelstein, as is the case with the vast majority of modern historians, saw in Renaissance science the recovery of the lost classical scientific heritage.[22] Yet the primary origin of the details of Renaissance science was the deliberately unacknowledged science of the late middle ages, a fact demonstrated by physicist Pierre Duhem in 10 detailed volumes. The demonstrated fact of the medieval origins of modern science has been ignored or actively suppressed by the humanist academic world. The first five volumes of Duhem's *Le Système du Monde* were in print in 1917; the second five volumes appeared only in 1954–59. In between, the French academic community and publishing world suppressed their publication because they undermined one of the most cherished myths of the Enlightenment, namely, that medieval science was "medieval." The story of this exercise in humanist academic censorship has been written by Jaki.[23]

16. Jaki, *The Only Chaos*, pp. 74–75.

17. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols., *The Spell of Plato*, 4th ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), I, p. 19, and the footnotes: pp. 208–19.

18. See any standard encyclopedia under "precession."

19. Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill: An essay on myth and the future of time* (Boston: Godine, [1969] 1977), ch. 9.

20. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 109–201.

21. Edelstein, *Idea of Progress*, p. xxxii.

22. *Ibid*., p. 141.

23. Stanley L. Jaki, "Science and Censorship: Hélène Duhem and the Publication of the 'Système du Monde,'" *Intercollegiate Review* (Winter 1985–86), pp. 41–49. Cf. Jaki, *Uneasy Genius: The Life and Work of Pierre Duhem* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984).

Duhem is still unknown to most historians. An exception was Robert Nisbet, who offered two brief, favorable sentences in his *History of the Idea of Progress* (1980).[24] Yet Nisbet repeatedly relied on Edelstein's book to defend his own view that the classical world accepted the idea of progress.[25]

It was Christianity, with its doctrine of creation, Fall, redemption, and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20), that brought together the Old Covenant idea of God's positive corporate sanctions and the New Covenant idea of world transformation. The twin doctrines of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension to the right hand of God made possible the overcoming of the more cyclical Old Covenant pattern of man's ethical Fall, his ethical redemption by God, and a subsequent fall. Christ's resurrection and ascension were definitive historical acts of victory over the familiar cycle of fall-redemption-fall. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:17–20).[26] Christ's bodily resurrection set forth the personal model; His bodily ascension set forth the civilizational model. The ascension proved His post-resurrection claim of total power over history (Matt. 28:18–20).

D. Finitude: Things and Time

Twice, God told mankind to multiply: Adam (Gen. 1:28) and Noah (Gen. 9:1). This command was a call to fill the earth. This is the dominion covenant. But it was also necessarily a call for man to acknowledge the limits of time. At some point in the future, the dominion covenant will be fulfilled. That day will mark the end of history. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (I Cor. 15:24–25). At that point, a new covenantal order will come into existence: an eternal order.

There is no possibility of permanent long-term growth in a finite

24. Robert A. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 78, 101.

25. *Ibid.*, ch. 1.

26. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 16.

universe. Nothing compounds indefinitely. At some point, the population reaches the limits of growth. At any positive rate of growth, wealth approaches infinity as a limit when the curve turns upward and becomes what we call an exponential curve.[27]

1. The Realm of the Quantum

The only thing in recent history—or any history—that does seem to grow without meaningful limits is the capacity of computer chips, which doubles every 18 months, possibly every year.[28] At this rate of growth, the computer chip will equal man's brain capacity sometime in the first third of the twenty-first century. Then, a year later, it will be twice as large. A year after that, four times as large, and so on. If this growth of chip capacity really is a law—Moore's law rather than Moore's observation—then men will face in the mid-twenty-first century the implications of a continuing theme in modern philosophy and, more graphically, science fiction: the replacement of man the decision-maker by one of man's tools. The data storage capacity of the microchip will equal man's brain in, say, 2030. Then, a year later, this chip capacity will double. And so on, ad infinitum. If knowledge is power, then impersonal computer systems will gain power to the extent that their computational ability is equated with knowledge.

The cost of building a single chip production plant is running into the billions of dollars. At some point, the cost of pursuing Moore's law should reach the limits of capital available to build the production facilities.[29] The big questions are these: Will the chips ever be used to create less expensive chip production facilities? Will microchips be used to design microfactories? Will the capacity of the chips overcome the cost of capital? Will the "intelligence" of the chips lower the cost of their production? If so, then we will have arrived at

27. Gary North, "The Theology of the Exponential Curve," *The Freeman* (May 1970); reprinted in Gary North, *An Introduction to Christian Economics* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), ch. 8.

28. This is known as Moore's law. This "law" was articulated in 1965 by Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel Corp., the creator of the modern microcomputer chip. Ray Kurzweil says that chip capacity is now doubling every year. Kurzweil, "The Law of Accelerating Returns" (March 7, 2001). This is published on his website, www.kurzweilai.net. A similar law to Moore's is Metcalfe's law: the cost-effectiveness of computer networks increases by the square of the number of terminals. George Gilder in 1997 added a third "law" governing telecommunications bandwidth. He forecasted that the supply of bandwidth will triple every year for the next 25 years. *Gilder Technology Report* (Feb. 1997), p. 1.

29. Interview with Gordon Moore: Peter Leyden, "Moore's Law Repealed, Sort Of," *Wired* (May 1997).

a state of affairs in which the law of decreasing returns is overcome in one area of life, and the most important area economically: the cost of obtaining usable information (though not necessarily wisdom).

Raymond Kurzweil, a developer of computerized machines that convert written text into voice patterns, thereby allowing the blind to read, stated that most of the cost of a computer comes from the chips, and all but about 2% of the cost of the chips derives from the cost of the information embodied on them.[30] George Gilder concluded: "Driving the technology in the quantum era will not be Goliath fabs [fabrication factories] that can produce millions of units of one design but flexible design and manufacturing systems that can produce a relatively few units of thousands of designs."[31]

The linear increase in the speed of the chips seems to violate a fundamental economic law: the law of diminishing returns.[32] But even if exponential linearity is possible in the quantum realm of the microcosm, as Gilder asserted, men so far can gain access to this microcosmic realm only through physical production of the gateways into the microcosm: the chips themselves. The non-quantum realm of chip manufacturing is still governed by the law of diminishing returns, as enormous capital losses in chip manufacturing testify from time to time. Yet even if this ever ceases to be true, there is still no reason to accept Gilder's moral vision: "Overthrowing matter, humanity also escapes from the traps and compulsions of pleasure into a higher morality of spirit."[33] Gilder confused the realm of the quantum with the human spirit, a mistake going back to Kant's theory of the noumenal realm. The antinomies separating the realm of the quantum from the realm of molecular reality are analogous to those separating Kant's noumenal from his phenomenal. The impersonal quantum realm has no ethics; neither does the impersonal phenomenal realm of cause-and-effect science. This is the problem with Kant's nature/freedom or science/personality dualism.[34] The God of the Bible is shoved out of both realms. So is His law. So are His sanctions.

30. Cited in George Gilder, *Microcosm: The Quantum Revolution in Economics and Technology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), p. 328.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

32. I wrote this in 1997. In 2001, Kurzweil proposed the law of accelerating returns.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

34. Richard Kroner, *Kant's Weltanschauung* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1914] 1956).

2. Population Growth Consumes Space

We live in the space-time continuum, however much we can make use of quantum physics. We are not subatomic creatures. The impossibility of indefinite compound growth of both humanity and man's wealth points to the limit of time. There will come a time when the physical room for mankind's multiplication will no longer allow any extension of the covenantal process of dominion. At that point, the Genesis command to multiply must end. A new cosmic order will be imposed by God, i.e., a new covenantal order (II Peter 3:10). Progressive sanctification in history will have fulfilled the terms of the dominion covenant.

Our world is generally governed by the laws of thermodynamics, even though there are exceptions, e.g., miracles.[35] The first law of thermodynamics establishes the fixity of matter-energy: the finitude of the creation. This law is as important covenantally as the second law, which establishes a one-way move from potential energy to used-up energy that can no longer do any work. *Both laws point to finitude*. Both laws establish theoretical *limits to growth*. Sections of the universe can be rearranged by man, but to do this, man must reduce the available energy or matter of the universe. This matter-energy is finite. Because of the cursed nature of the second law, so is time. Time's arrow moves in only one direction.

At today's rates of change, the second law seems to establish a cosmic limit of eons of time. How much time, no one can say for certain, but the estimates tossed out by cosmologists are never less than tens of billions of years. In stark contrast, human population growth accelerates the coming of the end of eschatological time, for it approaches infinity as a limit at an accelerating rate after the growth curve becomes exponential. The tens of billions of years supposedly remaining until either the heat death of the universe or the collapse back to the omega point of another Big Bang—though smaller than the first one, says the second law—are covenantally little more than conceptual side shows. *Astronomical time becomes irrelevant eschatologically in the face of mankind's compounding population growth*. What is significant eschatologically is population growth: the biological ability of man's population to reach the environmental limits of growth within a few centuries, or a few millennia if life outside the earth is environmentally sustainable. At 2% growth per annum, it will not

35. Chapter 18.

take tens of billions of years for mankind to fill up the cosmos. Six billion people growing at 2% per year become 327 billion people in two centuries, 2.4 trillion in three centuries, or (I think improbably) 52 quadrillion, 600 trillion in eight centuries.[36]

Of course, there can be catastrophes. Population growth can be reversed. So can economic growth. But the West's attainment of sustained positive economic growth rates in the range of over two percent per year since the late eighteenth century has placed before mankind a believable vision of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. When it comes to compound growth, a little goes a long way remarkably fast.

E. The Zero-Growth Movement

The ideology underlying the zero-growth movement—both population growth and economic growth—rests on a recognition that mankind will reach its environmental limits to growth relatively soon unless the compounding process ceases (which I think it will). There is a legitimate sense of foreboding associated with this temporal limit, a realization that man's definition of himself and his meaning in history will change radically when mankind's population reaches its environmental limits, which will not take two centuries if present growth rates continue. This sense of foreboding is the sense of impending doom, either eschatological or cultural—the transformation of the Enlightenment's commitment to growth. The defenders of the zero growth school of thought call for coercive state action to begin to impose judicial limits to growth now, before mankind's population reaches its environmental limits. They want men to begin to come to grips emotionally with the limits of growth. They correctly sense that there is some eschatological connection between nature's limits and man's temporal limits. There is a connection: the fulfillment of the dominion covenant and therefore its temporal annulment, either through a new revelation from God, which the New Testament does not allow (Rev. 22:18), or else the end of time.

Biblically speaking, long-term compound growth of both men and per capita wealth is the result of covenantal faithfulness. The judicial condition for maintaining such growth is freedom. *The zero-growth movement therefore challenges freedom in the name of saving the environment*. It is quite open in its call to place political restraints on economic freedom. Mankind's ability to multiply both men and

36. A two percent rate has a doubling date of about 36 years: 73/2.

things over time is seen as the great threat to the survival of "the good life," as defined by academics and intellectuals who have already attained historically great wealth, especially leisure. If the price of extending such freedom and therefore such wealth to the masses of humanity is the continuation of economic growth, and if humanity keeps multiplying because of its increasing wealth, therefore making mandatory even greater economic growth, then the zero-growth movement is ready to establish a new international world order that will use coercion to end the growth process.

The zero-growth movement is a movement of "haves" who are determined to keep most of what they have and deny an opportunity to the "have nots." The multiplication of scarce *positional goods*—goods that reflect social status and which lose their utility as status goods when lots of people can buy them[37]—threatens the present social order in which the rich and their well-paid spokesmen are visibly on top. By calling a halt to aggregate economic growth, the zero-growth movement seeks to stabilize today's production of positional goods and the wealth to buy them.

The zero-growth movement is to positional goods in general what California's Coastal Land Commission is to socially prime waterfront area property. Such property would lose its status as socially prime if agents of the middle class could buy up valuable land and build time share apartments and condominiums for re-sale. Thus, the land's present owners have used the state to prohibit such purchases. In the name of preserving the natural environment, the present owners of this highly unnatural environment—expensive homes, electricity lines, phone lines, etc.—keep out the riff-raff. They have made it illegal for their money-seeking neighbors to sell property to your agents and mine: real estate developers. The phrase "real estate developers" is a hated phrase in socially prime circles, for it means "the middle class."[38]

Meanwhile, the middle class does the same thing to the lower middle class through zoning commissions. Zoning commissions keep apartments and mobile home parks out of middle-class neighborhoods. The freedom of buying and selling threatens today's distribution of socially positional real estate. Existing owners of such real estate cannot afford to buy all of these goods, so they use the state to

37. Fred Hirsch, *The Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 11.

38. Thomas Sowell, *Pink and Brown People and Other Controversial Essays* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1981), p. 104. This essay appeared originally in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (March 23, 1979): "Those Phony Environmentalists."

restrict such purchases by newcomers. This raises the social value of existing property by lowering its market value. This is a state subsidy to those present owners of real estate who seek maximum status income rather than maximum money income.

F. Idolatry, Autonomy, and Power

Moses warned Israel of the major temptation that lay ahead: "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (v. 17). The wealth that would inevitably come from God as a way to confirm their keeping of the covenant would lead them into temptation. The covenant's ethically governed cause-and-effect sanctions in history would not sustain their faith in God. Israel would forget the sovereign Giver. They would attribute their wealth to another sovereign: themselves.

1. Idolatry

We know that Israel constantly worshipped idols until the era of the exile. These idols were fertility gods. Yet Moses' warning did not identify idolatry as the great threat to Israel, but rather self-worship. Moses did not warn them that they would attribute to idols the source of their wealth, yet this is what they did do for the next eight centuries. Israelites did not sacrifice their children by requiring them to pass through secular universities; they required them to pass through fire (II Kings 17:17; Ezek. 23:37). How can we reconcile this seeming discrepancy between idolatry and self-worship?

The pre-exilic idol was a *representational link* between man and the supernatural. By making their requests known to the idol, men sought their own ends. But the idol was not regarded as autonomous; it was part of the *continuum* between man and cosmic sources of power. The idol had to be constructed by man. This creative act transferred to man partial authority over the process of environmental manipulation. The god represented by the idol required man to become part of this creative process. Without man and the work of his hands, the god represented by the idol would lack something important: man's piety and fear. The god would also not be fed. For paganism, unlike Old Covenant religion, sacrifices and oblations were the care and feeding of gods.[39]

Pagan religion is a system of mutually beneficial transactions. Man gets what he wants by placating a god who wants something from

39. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, vol. 3 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 148.

man. Man and god are part of a larger cosmic process in which each of them achieves his goals through a division of labor. Both man and his god confront impersonal fate, impersonal chance, or both, depending on the situation, and each requires the services of the other in order better to attain his own goals. Neither can claim absolute autonomy, for each is entwined in impersonal cosmic forces, and each works most effectively in cooperation with the other.

2. Shared Authority

Then in what sense could the covenant-breaking Israelite say to himself that the power of his hands had brought him his wealth? Only in the sense of his *shared authority* in the process of wealth-getting. He would beg before an idol, and the god represented by this idol would then include him in the process of wealth-creation. It was man's request and man's ritual obeisance that made possible the creation of wealth. An idolatrous man would subordinate himself to an idol in some proscribed sense—some set of formal ritual boundaries—but not in the way that a covenant-keeper subordinates himself to a God who is completely autonomous and above the creation's processes. In idolatrous religion, there is *no complete autonomy*, but there is also *no complete subordination*. Both pagan man and his god were involved in a cosmic battle against impersonal forces and boundaries. Sometimes they joined forces; sometimes they did not. Pagan man saw his gods as only relatively more powerful than he was. It was a matter of degree. Thus, by linking himself to an idol, man could increase his likelihood of getting his own way by conforming ritually to a relatively more powerful being. But classical paganism saw man and god as co-laborers in the fields of fate or luck/chance.[40]

By placating a god through idolatrous worship, pagan man believed that he could in some way manipulate this god into doing man's will. Man's cleverness in getting a good deal determined the degree of his success as a bargainer. Man knew that he could not get something for nothing out of the deity, but he sought transactions that were weighted heavily in man's favor: something for practically nothing. The closer he came to this favorable exchange rate, the better he could claim, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." By getting a god to do man's will on man's terms,

40. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1944] 1957), pp. 157–59. Reprinted by the Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, Indiana.

pagan religion sought greater autonomy. What pagan man did not want was a god who drove a hard bargain. But the God of the Bible drives a very hard bargain: unconditional surrender (as I titled my 1981 book). Pagan man remained pagan because he rejected this God.

3. Autonomy as Power Over Nature

Man's quest for autonomy is a quest for power: self-made law. In the West, what is called autonomy is power over nature. To gain such power, mankind requires knowledge of nature's processes and sufficient capital to exploit this knowledge. Law is generally regarded as natural, i.e., outside of man, yet discoverable by man. In the most consistent forms of humanism, however, law is seen as man-made, i.e., an order imposed on the "raw stuff" of nature by man's creative mind. This suggestion seems crazy to most "common sense" rationalists, but it is inherent in Kant's revision of philosophical categories. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant concluded: "Thus the order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle *nature*, we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances, had not we ourselves, or the nature of our mind, originally set them there."[41] So, the judicial debate in the West has been between the advocates of judge-discovered law (e.g., English common law) and legislator-made law (e.g., European civil law).[42] Neither side accepts the legitimacy of God-revealed law. Such a view would undermine man's claim to autonomy.

In contrast to Western rationalism, Eastern mysticism seeks an escape from law and nature by immersion in the cosmic unity, which is impersonal and non-judgmental. Buddhist D. T. Suzuki announced: "Buddhism does not condemn this life and universe for their wickedness as was done by some religious teachers and philosophers. The so-called wickedness is not radical in nature and life. It is merely superficial."[43] The Eastern mystic sees both nature and law as illusions, as fetters on true understanding. But the nirvana of selflessness involves a surrender of personal autonomy in order to gain autonomy from nature and law: incorporation into the monistic one.[44] There is also pan-

41. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), A 125. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 147.

42. Cf. N. Stephen Kinsella, "Legislation and the Discovery of Law in a Free Society," *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, XI (Summer 1995), pp. 134–81.

43. D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Schocken Books, [1907] 1963), p. 128. Schocken Books is a Jewish publishing house.

44. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), Appendix C:B.

theism, which completely denies man's autonomy and seeks immersion in monistic nature. But Eastern mystical man is as adamant as Western rational man regarding the illegitimacy of God-revealed law in the sense of publicly declared universal standards. *Revealed law points to an autonomous God who dictates to an eternally subordinate man*. Eastern man is willing to forfeit his autonomy for the sake of ontological wholeness, but only to impersonal, monistic, non-judgmental forces.

Autonomy is a unique characteristic of God. God alone establishes the law. Man is a creature; he must conform himself to nature's laws or else seek to escape from nature, which also means escaping from meaning and sensibility. So, what Western man means by autonomy is a knowledge of impersonal law which gives him the ability to gain control over nature for his own ends. *Knowledge is power*. While man does not make the law, as the discoverer of law he can use it to manipulate nature. He seeks a profitable bargain from nature. It is not that he created the law; he merely exploits it for his own purposes. This is also the goal of idolatrous pagan man: not autonomy from his deity, but a cost-effective manipulation of nature through his deity. Modern man subordinates himself to an impersonal law-order with limited jurisdiction over him in order to gain a lever over nature. Similarly, pagan man subordinates himself to a personal deity of limited jurisdiction in order to gain a lever over nature. Modern man acknowledges his subordination to law in general in order to exercise control over things in particular. Pagan man acknowledges his subordination to a local deity in order to exercise control over things in particular. Modern man hopes to use the law to beat the law. Pagan man hopes to use the deity to beat the deity. Both seek power.

G. The Curse on the Quest for Autonomy

Moses foretold blessings if Israel obeyed God: an extension of the nation's wealth beyond the inheritance from Canaan. But if they rebelled, they could expect an analogous disinheritance: "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God" (vv. 19–20).[45]

Here Moses raised the issue of *false worship*, which is always en-

45. Chapter 23.

meshed in *man's quest for autonomy*. While they would claim that the might of their hands had created their wealth, in fact they would worship false gods. They would claim autonomy, but they would practice idolatry. They would claim to be in control, but in fact they would find themselves in moral bondage. God would then apply his corporate sanctions in history. Israel would be expelled from Canaan as surely as the Canaanites had been. Not all of the Canaanites were expelled by Israel (Josh. 15:63; cf. 17:12–13). Similarly, not all of the Israelites were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar; he left the poorest people behind (II Kings 24:14).

God promised to visit the same kinds of sins with the same negative sanctions. Inside the boundaries of Israel, false worship would no longer be tolerated. The Promised Land was under the covenant. The nation would visibly come under negative sanctions if they worshipped other gods.

So, long-term economic growth cannot be sustained by any society unless its members honor the terms of biblical law. This does not mean that only confessing nations can experience economic growth. It does mean that when prosperous nations grow lax about enforcing the biblical principles of civil law, they will find that their wealth dissipates. The blessings of external covenant-keeping will fade when men cease to honor the civil principles of biblical law: private property, freedom of exchange, restitution, honest weights and measures, and so on. But will men continue to honor these principles even though they do not honor the God who established them? This question has not been resolved.

H. The Transformation of 1800

We come to the most important unanswered historical question in man's history. It is this:

> **How did it happen that, beginning approximately in 1880 in the United Kingdom compound economic growth of between 2% and 3% per annum began and has not been reversed?**

In 1800, world population was about one billion people. Today, it is approaching seven billion. This is expected to go to nine billion by 2050.

In 1798, an anonymous book by Rev. T. Robert Malthus, a self-taught economist, appeared: *An Essay on Population*. It predicted that there would be no long-term increase in per capita wealth, due to the

rise of population. This prediction was conventional to a fault. Never before had rising per capita wealth not been overcome by rising population. The prediction was wrong. A similar prediction was made by Paul Ehrlich in his 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*. It became a best-seller. In its opening paragraph, it predicted the following: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate. . . ." The prediction was wrong. The world's population doubled over the next four decades, and per capita income rose.

Some economic historians date the Industrial Revolution around 1780. Others believe that sustained growth came in 1820. By selecting 1800, I am not too far out of line.

There are two aspects of the question. First, what changed in 1800 that could not have changed in 1800 B.C.? Second, why did this change take place in the tiny Island in Northwest Europe and not somewhere else?

Economic history as an academic profession has been operating since the early decades of the twentieth century. Some very intelligent practitioners have devoted their careers to answering this question. No one has come close to persuading his peers, let alone persuade non-economic historians. I studied economic history with two of them: Herbert Heaton, who was one of the founders of the profession, and Hugh Aitken, who edited *The Journal of Economic History* during the 1970s. They had no answer.

It is not just academic historians who have asked it. An islander in New Guinea asked a visiting physiologist and ornithologist, Jared Diamond, how it was that Westerners have so much cargo. Cargo was the islanders' designation to wealth as a result of their initial contacts with American troops that built airfields during World War II. The flying machines brought in so many goods. Diamond thought long and hard about the answer. He wrote a best-selling book, which became a three-par television documentary: *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997). He wound up as a professor of geography, a third academic field. He is widely respected. But his answers do not provide a solution to the question: Why Great Britain?

On the magnitude of what has taken place since 1800, two studies stand out: Gregory Clark's Darwinian explanation, *A Farewell to Alms* (2007) and Dierdre McCloskey's first two volumes in *The Bourgeois*

Trilogy: *Bourgeois Virtues* (2006) and *Bourgeois Dignity* (2010). McCloskey's book, *Bourgeois Dignity*, provides evidence on what could not have caused this transformation: thrift,[46] capital equipment,[47] the rise of greed,[48] the Protestant ethic (as formulated by Max Weber),[49] capital accumulation,[50] expropriation of poor workers,[51] accumulation of human capital (e.,g., education),[52] transportation breakthroughs,[53] natural resources,[54] coal,[55] foreign trade,[56] the slave trade,[57] expropriating foreign tribes,[58] commerce,[59] changes in property rights,[60] and science.[61] McKloskey's question has not been answered. "If the spinning jenny was such a swell idea in 1764 C.E. [academic lingo for A.D., imported from Judaism], why was it not in 1264, or 264, or for that matter 1264 B.C.E.. If factories extracted surplus value in 1848, why not in 1148? Thus the economic puzzle of the Industrial Revolution."[62] These are not trick questions. McCloskey has served as the president of the Economic History Association.

McCloskey offered a thesis in the first two volumes regarding what happened and why. The change had to do with rhetoric: the acceptance in Holland around 1600 of the legitimacy of commerce and innovation. This new outlook spread to Great Britain in the eighteenth century, and from there to the United States and Europe. This new outlook favorable to entrepreneurship made the difference. So, a change in belief regarding ethics and status was the basis of the great transformation.

I was favorable to the thesis. I wanted to believe it. It is consistent with my lifetime of study of just this question. But, to prove it, McCloskey had to show that a major change took place in Dutch theology and then ethics, a change that spread to the British Isles. First,

46. Dierdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Cbiucago Press, 2010), ch. 14.
47. *Ibid.*, ch. 15.
48. *Ibid.*, ch. 16.
49. *Ibid.*, ch. 16.
50. *Ibid.*, ch. 17.
51. *Ibid.*, ch. 18.
52. *Ibid.*, ch. 19.
53. *Ibid.*, ch. 20.
54. *Ibid.*, ch. 21.
55. *Ibid.*, ch. 22.
56. *Ibid.*, chaps. 23–25.
57. *Ibid.*, ch. 26.
58. *Ibid.*, ch. 27.
59. *Ibid.*, ch. 28.
60. *Ibid.*, chaps. 33–36.
61. *Ibid.*, ch. 38.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 377.

which ideas were new? Second, which primary sources support this change? Volume 3 (2016) failed to to raise this two-fold issue.

I offer this suggestion: a completely new view of progress. This transformation did take place: a shift from amillennialism to postmillennialism. There were postmillennial Dutch theologians, according to the former South African Calvinist theologian, F. N. Lee. In a letter to me dated May 1, 2011, he listed these: De Bres, Gellus, the *Dordt Dutch Bible*, Maresius, Voetius, Leusden, Huernius, Coccceius, Calovius, d'Outrein, Van der Kamp, Witsius, the two Vitringas, Hoornbeek, Essenius, Groenewegen, Koelman, Lampe, Hoekendijk, Brakel, and á Marck.[63] Postmillennialism for the first time in man's history offered a theological defense of linear, progressive wealth: meaning progress in the earthly kingdom of God that need not be reversed. I can think of no other significant explanation for a change in opinion regarding the relationship between ethics and the future.

Conclusion

Deuteronomy 8 sets forth the coventatal basis of compound economic growth. It ties sustained economic growth to corporate covenant-keeping. In doing so, it establishes eschatological limits to growth. In a finite world, nothing grows forever. Therefore, long-term economic growth as a predictable reward for corporate covenant-keeping becomes a testimony to the potential brevity of history. This brevity can be overcome through corporate covenant-breaking—the quest for autonomy—and God's predictable negative historical sanctions. *Deuteronomy 8 moved the discussion of time from the cosmos to the covenant*. It moved from cosmically imposed cyclical history[64] to God-imposed linear history. In doing so, this passage broke with ancient cosmology. Modern evolutionism's cosmology is equally incompatible with it.

Covenantal history is not subsumed under vast quantities of cosmic time; on the contrary, it is determinative of cosmic time. Covenant sanctions, not the second law of thermodynamics, determine the limits of history. Deuteronomy 8 establishes not merely the *covenantal possibility* of compound economic growth but also the *covenantal requirement* of such growth. A failure of a society to achieve this is a sign of its covenant-breaking status, whether permanent or temporary.

63. I sent this list to McCloskey in 2012.

64. Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959).

This brings me to a conclusion: the zero-growth movement is a covenant-breaking movement with a covenant-denying eschatology. Humanism's "limits to growth" philosophy is misconstrued. It focuses on physical limits to growth—inescapable in a finite world—in order to call men to impose anti-growth policies through political coercion. The biblical goal is to call on mankind to extend existing environmental limits to growth through production, including especially the production of additional human beings. Our awareness of the existence of final limits to growth should inspire us to pursue growth through personal capital accumulation and the de-capitalization of the state. The environmental limit of time is our great enemy, not the environmental limit of raw materials, including living space. By extending man's dominion to the final limits of the environment's ability to sustain human life, man reaches the eschatological limit of time. It is our God-assigned task to fill the earth, not to impose political limits on growth. The biblical concept of "fill the earth" *does* mean there are final limits.

The traditional plea of the foreign missions fund-raiser is woefully incomplete: "When that last sinner is brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ, Christ will return in glory!"[65] On the contrary, Christ will return in glory when mankind has fulfilled the dominion covenant, which includes the Great Commission.[66] That last sinner, whoever he or she may be, will complete the Great Commission, but only after mankind has completed the dominion covenant. The ideal of growth will never end in history. It is an eschatological corollary of history. Our task as covenant-keepers is to bring on the end of history by working to reach mankind's limits to growth.

65. I heard just such a plea sometime around 1965. I heard it again in early 1997 at a church-sponsored missions conference. Eschatology affects missions.

66. Gentry, *Greatness of the Great Commission*.

23

DISINHERITING THE HEIRS

> *And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the* LORD *thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the* LORD *destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the* LORD *your God.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:19–20

The theocentric principle undergirding this warning is the doctrine of God as the sanctions-bringer in history. The chapter deals with maintaining the kingdom grant through obedience to God's law. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him" (Deut. 8:5–6). They would lose the land grant if they worshipped other gods. The mark of this false worship would be disobedience: "ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God."

A. To Perish

The language of negative sanctions here is absolute. These sanctions were historical. This law was not a seed law. It did not apply exclusively to tribal relationships. It was a land law because it applied to Israel's survival inside Canaan's boundaries. But was it exclusively a land law? That is, does the same negative sanction of national removal from the land threaten every covenanted nation? This seems unlikely. Invasion, perhaps, but not actual removal. Mass conversion to a rival faith, yes, as in North Africa, 632–732, and Constantinople, beginning in 1453, but not actual removal. What Israel did to Canaan

was a one-time event: genocide. Similarly, what Assyria did to the Northern Kingdom, and Babylon did to Judah were unique events, analogous to what Israel had done to Canaan: kidnapping.

We can also ask: Do nations lawfully covenant with God in New Testament times? This text does not say, but the context of this text was a universal aspect of the covenant: covenantal forgetfulness and God's desire that all nations obey Him. "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him" (v. 6). Thus, if forgetfulness is a permanent covenantal problem, then it must still apply to nations, for the nation is the context of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20).[1]

The Hebrew word translated as "perish" is elsewhere translated as "destroy." In this context, the word seems to mean total destruction: the same degree of destruction that God was asking them to bring against the Canaanites. God had used Israel to destroy Arad completely, whose newly ownerless land Israel had then inherited, as promised. "And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah" (Num. 21:2–3). The destruction of Canaan was to be comparable:

> Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them (Num. 33:51–56).

This was a command in the form of a prophecy. God warned the Israelites that if they did not bring total destruction to the Canaan-

1. Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 4.

ites, the Canaanites would remain in the land to vex them spiritually. If Israel then worshipped the gods of Canaan, God would impose the negative sanction that He had instructed Israel to bring against Canaan. Nevertheless, this language of total destruction was conditional. There was always to be the possibility of forgiveness on God's terms when He dealt with Israel. This meant that there would not be total destruction. Moses warned them; then he comforted them:

> Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them (Deut. 4:23–31).[2]

So, on the one hand, there would be what God described as total destruction. On the other hand, captivity abroad would be substituted for total destruction. "And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up" (Lev. 26:38). Israel would perish as captives perish, not as the families of Korah and Dathan had perished: "They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (Num. 16:33).[3]

2. Chapter 10.

3. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012), ch. 7.

B. The Prophesied Seed

There was one promise that was not conditional: Jacob's. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). This was a messianic prophecy, not a covenantal prophecy. *Old Covenant messianic prophesies were not ethically conditional*. Nothing that man could do to rebel against God would in any way hinder the scheduled advent in history of the Messiah.

This being the case, the corporate negative historical sanction of destruction could not be total. *The language of total destruction had to be interpreted in terms of the messianic prophesies*. The destruction of Israel would be analogous to the destruction of Canaan: not total, as God had required, but partial, as Israel had actually imposed. A remnant of Canaan remained in the land; so would a remnant of Israel also remain during the Babylonian captivity. "And he [Nebuchadnezzar] carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land" (II Kings 24:14). A remnant of captives also would return.

God did not intend that the language of total destruction be interpreted literally, for He had already given Israel a pair of promises that made total destruction impossible. First, there would be an inheriting seed of Judah. Second, there would be an opportunity to repent in a foreign land. The symbolism (rhetoric) of Deuteronomy 8:19–20 was not to be understood by Israel as negating the eschatology of the messianic promises and the ethically conditional status of pre-Messiah covenantal lawsuits against Israel. *Judicial theology always governs biblical symbolism*; the latter is in service to the former.[4]

The promised messianic inheritance assured Israel of some minimal degree of continuity. The inheritance would not be completely removed from the nation at least until Shiloh appeared. Israel would not be removed from the face of the earth, although Israel might be removed from the face of the land. This physical removal was the covenantal threat set before them in Deuteronomy 8:19–20. Part of the landed inheritance would be removed from them and transferred to others. Upon their return, the old laws of landed inheritance would be modified to include strangers. Israel would no longer have a monopoly of ownership in the Promised Land. "And it shall come to

4. This is a basic principle of the hermeneutics of Christian Reconstruction and the Calvinist tradition generally.

pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek. 47:22–23).

Israel could not lay claim to Canaan unconditionally. Israel would gain legal title through conquest, but this legal title was no better than their corporate maintenance of the terms of ownership. These terms of ownership were covenantal. They involved biblical law. God reserved the right to evict Israel from the land if the terms of His contract were not honored.

Bodily eviction was the primary threatened sanction here. God would use another nation to sweep them out of the land, just as He would soon use them to sweep out the Canaanites. God is jealous; He would not tolerate false worship by His people. *The negative sanction of disinheritance would remind them of their conditional status as inheriting sons*. The Babylonian captivity would remind them of this conditional inheritance. Upon the remnant's return from captivity, the new terms of landed inheritance would remind them that landed inheritance would no longer rest legally on the original conquest under Joshua. It would rest on a family's mere presence in the land at the time of the captives' return, even a gentile family (Ezek. 47:21–23).[5] The judicial threat of Deuteronomy 8:19–20 was this: if Israel did not preserve the monopoly of God's public worship in the land of Israel, God would not preserve Israel's monopoly of landed inheritance.

This post-exilic inclusion of strangers in the inheritance pointed to a broadening of the covenant to include the gentiles. With the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies, the gentiles became co-heirs of the entire covenantal inheritance. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27–29). This lay in the distant future in Moses' day.

5. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 22.

C. Predictable Corporate Sanctions

Deuteronomy 8:19–20 established specific negative sanctions. The law of the covenant did not stand alone. To this law were attached sanctions. In this instance, the negative sanction of national eviction was built into the Mosaic law. To discuss God's covenant law-order apart from God's predictable corporate sanctions in history is at best a theological mistake and at worst a mark of self-conscious antinomian rebellion. It is comparable to discussing history apart from eternity and its two-fold sanctions. To say that heaven and hell are not predictable is to deny Christian orthodoxy. In fact*, the open denial of a literal hell and a literal lake of fire is the premier mark of heresy in the modern world*. This denial of predictable sanctions has also been moved from eternity to history. It is widely believed among Protestant scholars today that there are no predictable divine sanctions in history.

This denial of predictable historical sanctions, if true, would make impossible the creation of a uniquely biblical social theory. If God does not bring predictable corporate sanctions in history in terms of His Bible-revealed law, then Christians and Jews must adopt some version of natural law theory or democratic theory or some other humanist system of man-imposed sanctions in their search for social predictability. Sanctions are an inescapable concept in social theory. It is never a question of sanctions vs. no sanctions. It is always a question of which sanctions imposed by whom in terms of which law-order. There is no escape from this limit on man's thinking. *If there were no predictable relationship between biblical law and sanctions, there could be no biblical social theory*. Without biblical social theory, there can be no accurate social theory. Social theory is either biblical or else incorrect, as is equally true of all human thought.[6]

1. Political Theory

Political theory is a subset of social theory. This is because politics is a subset of a more comprehensive system of sanctions: a higher law and therefore higher sanctions. In modern humanist political theory, political representatives are believed to represent larger social forces. As such, representatives impose civil sanctions as agents or legal representatives of these forces. These forces may be seen as personal or impersonal, but they are always believed to be partially predictable by man.

6. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 1998), pp. 496–529.

The justification for civil sanctions always rests on a formal appeal to a specific theory of justice. Justice is always defined as a coherent system of law and sanctions. In all widely held theories of politics, justice can be legitimately sought in the realm of politics only because *justice is understood as being broader than politics*. Men believe that they must submit to negative institutional sanctions because they believe that these sanctions in some way will prevent or forestall the imposition of even more threatening negative sanctions by something more powerful and more menacing than man and his sanctions.

Consider a simple example. Residents of urban areas located close to earthquake faults elect political representatives who pass laws establishing building codes that reduce the threat of collapse during an earthquake. The impersonal seismic forces that produce earthquakes are understood as governed by the laws of geology. These laws can be studied and catalogued. While individual earthquakes may not be predictable very far in advance, the statistically predictable occurrence of earthquakes in general is widely believed. This predictability is what justifies the building codes. Negative civil sanctions for violating these building codes are regarded as legitimate because of the statistical predictability of earthquakes. The lesser threat of civil sanctions is justified in terms of the larger threat of collapsing buildings.

The laws of geology do not autonomously justify such building codes. There must be an added element of moral law. An earthquake is a disrupter of the peace—an invader from below. The state is seen as the preserver of the peace. Building codes therefore help to preserve the peace, just as fire codes do. Other arguments could also be introduced: the state as insurer, protector, or healer. These additional elements are used today to justify civil building codes in seismically vulnerable regions. Conclusion: a knowledge of physical laws is necessary but not sufficient to justify negative civil sanctions. Social theorists should also consider the effects on society of physical laws.

On what basis are laws against certain immoral public acts justified? What if there were no overarching system of moral law with predictable sanctions attached? That is, if God did not threaten to bring coercive sanctions against society in general for tolerating certain immoral acts, would there be a legitimate reason for the state to bring coercive sanctions against those who commit such acts? This is the issue of what is commonly designated as a *victimless crime*. Economist and legal theorist F. A. Hayek wrote: "At least where it is not believed that the whole group may be punished by a supernatural power for

the sins of individuals, there can arise no such rules from the limitation of conduct towards others, and therefore from the settlements of disputes."[7] In short, "no God–no victim."

The judicial case against the sale of addictive drugs might be made in terms of addiction as a potential source of crime. Question: On what judicial or moral basis can negative civil sanctions be imposed on *potential* causes of future crimes? Wouldn't this open the door to civil sanctions against not-yet-crimes and might-become- crimes? Could the state then be restrained from becoming tyrannical? The state would then replace God as the perceived victim of victimless crimes. Its majesty would be seen as threatened by such activities, and many are the actions that might challenge this majesty. If drug addiction is uniquely threatening to social peace, those who defend the imposition of civil sanctions against addictive drug sales must make their case based on the statistical relationship between widespread addiction and crime. This is because the case for negative civil sanctions against the sale of addictive drugs cannot be made directly from biblical law. There is no biblical civil law against drunkenness except in the case of the rebellious son. But gluttony is also specified in the text as a mark of his rebellion (Deut. 21:20).[8] No one suggests negative civil sanctions against the sale of fattening foods—or at least no one had at the time that I wrote this sentence.[9]

Governments have passed many laws against the sale of drugs in response to the steady increase in middle-class addiction, which has accompanied the breakdown of biblical faith. The nineteenth century, which had few such laws, was not cursed by an addicted population. Humanist society has failed. Laws against drug sales cannot restore the lost faith in God and meaning. They merely raise the price of rebellion, but at the cost of a great loss of honest people's liberties.

2. Sanctions and Social Theory

Modern social theory has abandoned the idea that God brings predictable sanctions in history in terms of His law. This includes most Christian social theory, such as it is. Theonomy is the main exception to this rule. For humanist social theory, the idea of God's sanctions

7. F. A. Hayek, *Rules of Order*, vol. 1 of *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 101.

8. Chapter 50.

9. On July 23, 2002, a class-action lawsuit in the United States was filed against four fast-food companies. The companies are accused of selling dangerous products that make people fat.

in history is relegated to *adiaphora*: things indifferent to the humanist faith. Mirroring this humanistic outlook is modern Christian theology, which relegates civil law to *adiaphora*. For humanists, God's law and His sanctions in history are irrelevant to their worldview; for most Christians, God's law and sanctions in history are equally irrelevant to their worldview. On this shared testimony, the humanist-pietist alliance has rested for three centuries.[10] Political pluralists have always declared this confession of faith, from Roger Williams (1630s) to the Christian Coalition (1990s).[11] To the extent that Christians are beginning to consider the possibility that God brings predictable corporate sanctions in history, to that extent they have moved away from political pluralism and toward theonomic covenantalism.[12]

The dividing issue here is the question of the source of our knowledge of these laws and also their divinely imposed sanctions. If the

10. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

11. As I wrote in this book's Foreword, the Christian Coalition is a political action organization. It was created in 1989 by the satellite/cable television multimillionaire entrepreneur Pat Robertson, who had resigned from the Southern Baptist ministry in 1988 before he made an unsuccessful run in 1988 for the Republican Party's nomination for President. In its 1995 political testament, *Contract With the American Family*, the organization announced the standard pluralist-Unitarian worldview that has governed the United States since the late nineteenth century. Ralph Reed, Jr., then its Executive Director, proclaimed: "We believe in an America where all citizens are judged on the content of their character, and not on their gender, race, religion, or ethnic background" (pp. ix–x). This is the standard pluralist-humanist litany, "without respect to race, color, creed, or national origin." It places character above theological confession (creed). It defines the content of character apart from the Bible. The document correctly invokes Roger Williams as the originator of the American doctrine of the separation of church and state (p. 5) It rewrites colonial history, just as third-rate humanist high school history textbooks have done for a century, by claiming that the Puritans had fled from "the European system of officially sanctioned 'state religions'" which "benefited neither the state nor the religion involved" (p. 5). In fact, Massachusetts and Connecticut maintained state-established Congregational churches well into the 1800s: Connecticut, 1818; Massachusetts, 1833. The document calls for tax-funded education that maintains "traditional values" (p. 13), which was exactly what Unitarian Horace Mann called for when he promoted the public school movement in Massachusetts in the 1830s: traditional values stripped of all theological content. *Contract With the American Family* (Nashville, Tennessee: Moorings, a division of Random House, 1995) is subtitled: *A bold plan by Christian Coalition to strengthen the family and restore common-sense values*. This is an appeal to something resembling eighteenth-century Scottish common-sense rationalism, which did not survive Darwinism and modern existentialist philosophy. The last major institution to defend Scottish rationalism was Princeton Theological Seminary, which went liberal in 1929. See Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), ch. 10.

12. See Appendix C, section on "Pietism and Politics." See also Appendix H: "Week Reed: The Politics of Compromise."

source is believed to be shared by all rational men irrespective of their belief in the Bible as the unique, revealed word of God, then natural law theory undergirds social theory, either as some variant of medieval scholasticism or right-wing Enlightenment humanism. In both cases, Protestants find themselves under the domination of humanism, either by way of Greece or Scotland, Aristotle or the two Adams: Ferguson and Smith. On the other hand, if the source of this knowledge is not shared, but is found exclusively in the Bible, then theonomic covenantalism undergirds social theory.

D. Sanctions and Sovereignty

Rushdoony wrote that the source of a society's law is its god.[13] His friend T. Robert Ingram had written the same thing a decade earlier. "Clearly the law giver in any case is the highest authority for any people. The origin of its law is its god."[14] This is an accurate observation, but it is incomplete as stated. The source of a society's sanctions is also its god. I will go further: *if a society distinguishes sharply between the source of its law and the source of its sanctions, the latter is the god of that society*. In general, however, societies regard the source of law and sanctions as the same.

There is always some degree of schizophrenia regarding a society's god because there are multiple sources of sanctions in history. In the twentieth century, Protestants gave lip service to God as sovereign over history, yet they also denied that God's law has any place in civil law codes. But if God is over history, yet without predictable sanctions in history, He becomes analogous to the god of deism. Christian social theory then becomes something analogous to Scottish Enlightenment moral philosophy. Protestant Christians for three centuries have gone a long way down this road in the direction of operational deism. They affirm that God brings sanctions against societies, but not in terms of biblical law. *God supposedly brings sanctions in terms of natural law*. He is said to have revealed Himself equally clearly to all rational men regarding His universal but theologically neutral moral law, i.e., natural law. This universal revelation is said to supersede biblical law, which was supposedly annulled by the New Testament. This removes fundamental law from the Bible and transfers it to

13. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), p. 5.

14. T. Robert Ingram, *The World Under God's Law: Criminal Aspects of the Welfare State* (Houston, Texas: St. Thomas Press, 1962), p. 3.

logic, custom, or power. It therefore establishes *the political sovereignty of man*, who no longer must confess faith in the God of the Bible in order to rule legitimately in civil society.

To the degree that a system of cosmic or social sanctions is regarded as unpredictable in history, to the same degree are sanctions-bringing representative agents freed from observing the details of cosmic or social law. They can substitute other laws that are in no clear way governed by cosmic or social law. The sovereignty of God progressively becomes the sovereignty of man, which in turn elevates the sovereignty of the state, which is seen increasingly as the ultimate sanctions-bringer in history. The hierarchy of politics then supersedes all others.

Conclusion

The covenantal threat listed here was disinheritance. Moses was preparing the conquest generation for a military campaign. The military spoils would be the long-deferred inheritance: Canaan. The threat of disinheritance was a powerful threat for such a group. Israel had waited 470 years for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Now, at the very time of fulfillment, Moses warned them that if they broke covenant with God by worshipping other gods, God would remove them from the land. The first step toward apostasy, Moses warned, was their vain imagining that they, rather than God, were the source of their wealth (v. 17).[15]

The threat was their removal from the land. God would remove them as surely as He would soon remove the present inhabitants. This promise of disinheritance was no less reliable than the promise of inheritance to Abraham. Inheritance was about to take place; they could rest assured that disinheritance would also take place. If they worshipped the gods of Canaan, God would remove them from those regions in which local deities were believed to exercise their sovereignty. If Israelites attributed to themselves and their adopted local gods the wealth they would enjoy in Canaan, God would deal with them in the same way. This warning established a fundamental principle of covenant theology: *similar corporate sins bring similar negative corporate sanctions in history*.

Whenever those who call themselves by God's name refuse to believe this judicial principle, even going so far as to deny its continuing

15. Chapter 21.

authority, they find themselves on the defensive. Those who worship other gods and obey other laws promise positive sanctions in history. If those who are chosen by God to worship Him and obey His laws refuse to acknowledge the threat of God's negative corporate sanctions in history, they become "we, too" social theorists. "Our way is just as good as your way." This eventually becomes, "Our way is pretty much the same as your way, since God is the author of universal truth. Your way obviously works—positive sanctions abound—so we will restructure our way to mimic your way." As dispensational publicist Tommy Ice put it, "Premillennialists have always been involved in the present world. And basically, they have picked up on the ethical positions of their contemporaries."[16] In this, they have not been alone. Christian social theorists have been doing this from the beginnings of systematic Christian social theory in the medieval West. They have followed the lead of the early church's apologists, who imported the wisdom of Greece in the name of common-ground truth They have attempted to combine Jerusalem and Athens. The result has been a compromised intellectual defense of the Christian faith.[17] There comes a time when Christian theologians should abandon traditions that have compromised their critiques of their religious and epistemological enemies. So should Christian social theorists.

16. Tommy Ice, response in a 1988 debate: Ice and Dave Hunt vs. Gary North and Gary DeMar. Cited in Gary DeMar, *The Debate Over Christian Reconstruction* (Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1988), p. 185.

17. Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), ch. 4; cf. Van Til, *Christianity in Conflict* (Syllabus, Westminster Seminary, 1962).

24

OVERCOMING THE VISIBLE ODDS

Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak! Understand therefore this day, that the LORD *thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the* LORD *hath said unto thee. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the* LORD *thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the* LORD *hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the* LORD *doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the* LORD *thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the* LORD *sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the* LORD *thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.*

DEUTERONOMY 9:1–6

Moses here presented a prophecy. This prophecy, as with most biblical prophecies, had an ethical component. God always deals with men covenantally, and the covenant rests on God's law.[1] This prophecy announced the near-term fulfillment of God's original promise to Abraham. That promise had linked Israel's victory to Canaan's immorality: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).[2] The iniquity of the Amorites was now full. The day of the Lord was at hand.

The Israelites were commanded to begin the conquest. This command rested on God as sovereign over history. His prophecy regarding the fourth-generation's conquest of Canaan was about to come true. The theocentric nature of this prophecy is obvious. God's decree is sovereign.

This was a land law.[3] It related to the conquest. But it had implications far beyond the conquest. It related corporate disobedience to defeat in history as a general principle.

A. The Day of the Lord

"Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day." This announcement was not supposed to be taken literally. The Israelites did not cross the Jordan that day. Moses still had a great deal more to tell them, as the length of the remainder of this commentary indicates. Moses did not die that day. After he died, the nation mourned 30 days (Deut. 33:8). Then they crossed the Jordan. So, what did Moses mean by "this day"?

The "day" referred to here was the day of the Lord. This phrase refers in Scripture to *a period of divine judgment that constitutes a turning point in a society's history*. The phrase, "the day of the Lord," does not occur in the Bible until the prophets; it occurs most often in the Book of Isaiah. Generally, it refers to a period of negative corporate sanctions.[4] "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty" (Isa. 13:6). Occasionally, the phrase "that day" is used to describe a time of national restoration: positive corporate sanctions. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and

2. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

3. On land laws, see Appendix J.

4. "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isa. 2:12). "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2:17). "Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day" (Isa. 9:14).

gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:11–12). *The day of the Lord was a period of national sanctions: inheritance and disinheritance*. Usually, it meant disinheritance for rebellious Israel and inheritance for some invader. In this context, however, it meant Israel's inheritance and Canaan's disinheritance.

The Bible uses the language of heavenly transformation to describe covenantal-political transformations. This is clear in Isaiah's prophecy regarding the defeat of Babylon by Medo-Persian kingdom (Isa. 13:1).

> Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" (Isa. 13:9–13).[5]

This same cosmic language was invoked prophetically by Jesus to describe the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matt. 24:29).[6] *The Bible uses the language of cosmic transformation to describe national disinheritance: the end of an old world order*. An old world order is then replaced by a newer world order. The final new world order in history is Jesus Christ's. No other will ever replace it. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

The time period of judgment normally lasts for longer than a day, but the final consummation comes on one day, the day of final judgment being the archetype. It is marked by either the total destruction of the unrighteous or their unconditional surrender.[7] The siege of Je-

5. David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1985), pp. 98–99.

6. *Ibid*., p. 100.

7. North, *Unconditional Surrender*.

rusalem, which ended the Old Covenant order, took far more than a day, but it was consummated with a day of destruction: the burning of the temple—not by official command—by a pair of Roman soldiers. The Jewish defector Josephus, who became a court historian for the Roman emperor, referred to this as "that fatal day."[8] This fiery event marked the demise of the Mosaic priesthood in Israel. It also marked the origin of Rabbinic Judaism, or as Neusner called it, "the Judaism of the two Torahs," i.e., the Old Testament and the Mishnah/Talmud.[9] The teachers of the oral law had followed the Pharisees rather than the Sadducees; their ideas triumphed among the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem.[10] From that time on, those who proclaimed themselves as the legitimate heirs of Moses added their respective authoritative commentaries on the Old Testament: the New Testament for Christians and Mishnah/Talmud for Jews.[11] In both cases, the respective interpretive commentaries were assumed by their adherents to take precedence operationally over the Old Testament, although neither group challenged the authority of the Old Testament.[12] Both sides acknowledged the radical covenantal discontinuity that had taken place with the burning of the temple. The Old Order was gone forever. It cannot possibly replace the New World Order of Jesus Christ, for no order ever will.

This is why dispensational theology is utterly wrong about: (1) the removal of the church from history by the Rapture; (2) the absence of every trace of the New Testament order during the interim period of seven years until Christ returns bodily to set up His millennial kingdom; and (3) the substitution of a Jewish theocratic-bureaucratic order during the millennium, where temple sacrifices of bulls and sheep and goats will be restored. Although dispensational theologians refuse to say this in print, these animal sacrifices would have to replace the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is said by dispensa-

8. Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of The Jews*, VI:IV:5.

9. Jacob Neusner, *An Introduction to Judaism: A Textbook and Reader* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 157. Neusner is the most prolific scholarly author in modern history. His bibliography runs over 1,000 books: a book every three weeks for 40 years. For a list of his books, see: "Jacob Neusner bibliography." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, September 28, 2020; bit.ly/NeusnerBooksWiki.

10. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1933] 1987), p. xiii.

11. An exception is the Karaite sect of Judaism, which acknowledges the authority only of the Pentateuch. They organized themselves as a separate sect in the eighth century, A.D. Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 169.

12. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. xi.

tionalists to memorialize the death of Christ. What will the "memorials" (Scofield's term)[13] of the animal sacrifices symbolize? There is no equality possible; one sacrificial "memorial" or the other must be authoritative.

There will be no revival of a Jewish theocratic order,[14] because Jesus Christ is not a bigamist with two brides and a different sacramental system for each of them. The gentile church is not Leah, with the Jewish church serving as Rachel, or vice versa. There is only one bride for the Bridegroom. There is also only one final world order: Jesus Christ's. It will never be broken by an eschatological discontinuity: the Rapture, followed by a Great Tribulation period. We learn this from Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares. "He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13:28–30). Jesus explained: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world" (vv. 39–40). There will be no uprooting of either wheat or tares, the church or the rebels, until the end of time.[15]

Moses told Israel that a day of covenantal discontinuity had now arrived. There would soon be a covenantal displacement in the land of Canaan. The Levitical laws governing landed inheritance (Lev. 25) and all the other Mosaic land laws would soon have a meaningful

13. See the comments on Ezekiel 43:19 in the original *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), p. 890, and suggestion number one in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford, 1967), p. 888n. Suggestion number one is that these animal sacrifices will be memorials, just as Scofield wrote. Suggestion number two simply scraps the whole temple-sacrifice scheme by allegorizing the passage—a familiar approach of dispensational "hermeneutical literalists" whenever their professed hermeneutics leads them into some embarrassing exegetical dead end. The authors were too timid to say which suggestion they preferred.

14. If, as the dispensationalists argue, "Israel always means Israel and not the church," then the millennial age must be Jewish. Dispensationalists appeal to the Psalms to describe the restored kingdom. As postmillennialist O. T. Allis wrote in 1945, "According to Dispensationalists the Psalms have as their central theme, Christ and the Jewish remnant in the millennial age." Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1945), p. 244.

15. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 29.

geographical context. *A new world order was about to replace the Canaanites' old world order*. The magnitude of this covenantal discontinuity would be visible to all. Everyone would know in retrospect that God alone had been behind this transformation because of the disparity in physical size between the winners and the losers. The multitude of Israelite ants would consume the Anakim elephants.

B. The Bigger They Are

The Anakim were large people, probably Goliath-sized. Goliath was a little over nine feet tall (I Sam. 17:4). Spies sent by Moses to survey Canaan had reported: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:33). The region around Canaan had been the home of several groups of these giant peoples. "The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims" (Deut. 2:10–11). The Hebrew word translated "giant" is *rawfaw*.

Og of Bashan was a giant. He was described by Moses as the last of them. "For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man" (Deut. 3:11). A man who sleeps in a bed that is over 13 feet long and six feet wide is either a giant or else worries a lot about falling out of bed. Og's size did him no good militarily. "And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, being the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants" (Deut. 3:13). The military success of Israel over Og of Bashan was a trans-Jordan preliminary testament: Israel would inherit Canaan despite the presence of giants.

Which giants? Wasn't Og the last of them? In what sense was Og the last of the remnant of giants, when Anakim still dwelt in Canaan? Moses said: "For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants." What did Moses mean by this? Was Og even larger than the others? The size of his bed indicates that he was. A man the size of Goliath does not need a bed over 13 feet long. Og was the largest giant of all, the last of the original race mentioned in Genesis 6:4.[16] Ca-

16. The legend of these giants can be found in Hesiod's *Theogany*, lines 53–54. This is probably an eighth-century work contemporary with the ministry of Isaiah. See also

naan's Anakim were *accounted* as giants (Deut. 2:11, 20). When God enabled Israel to conquer Og, He showed Israel that the "not quite giants" would not be a large problem.

Other tribes of peoples accounted as giants had been conquered by Israel's relatives, Esau and Ammon. "That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims; A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead: As he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day" (Deut. 2:20–22). If the heirs of evil Esau and the even more evil Ammon had inherited the lands of the giants, then Israel should not fear the Anakim. The issue was ethics, not size, as the text indicates.

Israel in David's time faced Philistine heirs of the giants. In each case, the giants lost their battles with individual challengers from Israel (II Sam. 21:16–22). The old phrase, "the bigger they are, the harder they fall," is well illustrated by the fate of the giants.

C. Counting the Costs

Moses had sent out spies to survey the land and report back (Num. 13). The sight of the giants had terrified some of the spies (v. 33). What they had personally seen made a greater impression on them than what they had heard from God through Moses. Then Joshua and Caleb reminded them of what they had heard. "If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel" (Num. 14:8–10). This did not persuade the skeptics; in fact, it outraged the other spies. When men's hearts are rebellious, what they see means more to them than what God has told them. That was the 10 spies' problem. Each of them substituted "I saw with my own eyes" for "Hear, O Israel."

We are told to count the cost of our actions. Jesus warned His listeners regarding the cost of discipleship. He used analogy of mil-

Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, 2nd ed. (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, [1927] 1962), pp. 452–53.

itary planning. "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:31–33).[17] This requirement to count the cost led to Moses' decision to send out the spies. But what 10 of the dozen spies forgot was this: *facts are to be interpreted in terms of God's word*. Facts are not autonomous; there are no "brute facts." Facts are always interpreted facts. They are interpreted correctly by God because they have been created by God. They are what God says they are because He created them that way. Van Til has put it this way: "The non-Christian assumes that man is ultimate, that is, that he is not created. Christianity assumes that man is created. The non-Christian assumes that the facts of man's environment are not created; the Christian assumes that these facts are created."[18] The spies were supposed to interpret what they saw by what God had told them. Accurate interpretation begins and ends with hearing and believing the word of God.

Israel was facing what appeared to be enormous odds against the nation. The spies' own eyes seemed to tell them this. But men's eyes tell them nothing apart from men's faith. Our eyes may confirm our faith, fail to confirm it, or confuse us, but they do not operate autonomously. The information that eyes provide must then be interpreted. The Israelites were told to estimate the odds in terms of God's promise to Abraham regarding the sins of Canaan: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).

D. Judicial Blindness and Deafness

Soon after Moses announced the crossing of the Jordan, he revealed to Israel the rules of warfare. The first rule: "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. 20:1). God subsequently warned them in the midst of the conquest

17. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 35.

18. Cornelius Van Til, *The Christian Theory of Knowledge* (n.p.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), p. 14.

of Canaan: "Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough [hamstring] their horses, and burn their chariots with fire" (Josh. 11:6b). Israel defeated the initial wave of charioteers, just as God had promised (Josh. 11:9). But the Israelites refused to believe their own eyes, just as they had refused to believe their own eyes at the Red Sea. "And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel" (Josh. 17:16). "And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron" (Jud. 1:19).

Israel's theological inheritance to each succeeding generation was reduced by the power of sight over hearing. They would not listen to God's written word and His prophets. The Bible speaks of hearing and seeing as ethical. *What is foundational is not the physical acuity of man's sight and hearing, but a man's covenantal framework of interpretation*. Isaiah wrote:

> Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land" (Isa. 6:8–12).

God inflicted judicial blindness on the nation. Israelites would see and hear, yet they would not perceive the covenantal meaning of what they saw and heard. This biblical principle of *judicial blindness* was basic to Jesus' use of parables:

> And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

> And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear (Matt. 13:10–16).[19]

Paul also quoted Isaiah's words in his final recorded lecture to the Jews: "Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Acts 28:26–27). The hearing that should govern men's decision-making is covenantal hearing.

E. Comparative Degrees of Moral Rebellion

The text says that God would soon give the victory to the Israelites despite their unrighteousness. "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (v. 5). Three ideas are present here: (1) Israel is not righteous; (2) the Canaanites are more unrighteous than Israel; (3) God's promise to Abraham will be fulfilled.

The original promise had included a prophecy regarding the sins of the Amorites: they would be filled, i.e., their national boundaries of tolerable rebellion would be breached. The *promise* of land for Abraham's heirs was not devoid of a specific *prophecy* regarding the ethical condition of the Canaanites. The fulfillment of the promise was therefore as secure as the fulfillment of the prophecy. The element of ethical conditionality had been present in the original terms of the promise.[20]

The promise not only did not annul the ethical stipulations of God's covenant with Abraham, its fulfillment would soon confirm that covenant, Moses said. But the Israelites were not to regard the fulfillment of the original promise as a confirmation of their righ-

19. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 27.
20. Chapter 17.

teousness. They were only to regard the fulfillment as confirming the Canaanites' even greater unrighteousness. The filling up of the Canaanites' iniquity had placed a chronological boundary around Canaan: the day of the Lord. The Canaanites would not extend their dominion over the land beyond this chronological boundary, which was both an ethical-covenantal boundary and a prophetic boundary. God had announced to Abraham, "Thus far and no further" regarding Canaan's sins and its time remaining. Now He would fulfill His promise.

1. Canaanites Were Worse

Esau had defeated giants; so had Ammon (Deut. 2:20–22). Yet Esau and Ammon were not paragons of national virtue. Ammonites were so evil that it took 10 generations of covenant membership to enable an Ammonite to become a citizen of Israel (Deut. 23:3). Yet God had delivered the giants into their hands. This victory was not evidence of the righteousness of either Esau or Ammon. Compared to the giants, however, they were better.

Moses warned Israel not to misinterpret the victory that lay ahead. "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. 9:4). The Israelites could not legitimately regard themselves as morally deserving of the victory. Israel deserved nothing special, but the Canaanites deserved worse. Their evil had multiplied over time. Their debts to God had compounded. Their day of reckoning had almost arrived. The Israelites were to serve as agents of God's judgment. Morally speaking, the Israelites were in much the same condition as the deceased reprobate at whose funeral the best that the eulogizer could say about him was this: "His brother was worse." Israel, as God's adopted son, was better than the Canaanites, the disinherited sons of Adam.

Autonomous man has no legal claim on God. The temptation of Israel was to regard the impending military victory as a sign of their superior ethical standing before God. The lure, once again, was autonomy. "For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land" was the ethical equivalent of "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17).[21] Both assertions rested on a belief in Israel's autonomy. Moses warned them: "Under-

21. Chapter 21.

stand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Deut. 9:6). Then he recounted their experience in the wilderness: "Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD. Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you" (vv. 9–10). The cause, Moses reminded them, was the golden calf incident (vv. 12–14). Part of the inheritance from the exodus generation to the conquest generation was a tendency to rebellion.

The threat then had been national destruction. It still was (Deut. 8:19–20).[22] When God had threatened to destroy them after the golden calf incident, Moses had interceded with God, appealing to His name and reputation. "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (Ex. 32:12–14). It would have been futile for Moses to have invoked Israel's righteousness as the basis of God's extension of mercy. This was still true for the generation of the conquest.

2. The Adamic Covenant

Canaanite civilization was unrighteous. More than this: it was progressively unrighteous. It kept getting worse. It had therefore reached its temporal limits. It had reached its boundaries of dominion. Canaan was about to forfeit its inheritance.

If the unrighteousness of Canaan had progressed to such a degree that God was willing to impose total negative sanctions, then there must have been a standard of righteousness governing Canaan. Negative sanctions without law is tyranny. God is no arbitrary tyrant. Then on what lawful basis does God impose negative sanctions? Paul wrote that the negative sanction of death rules in history because the law of God condemns all of Adam's heirs. "Wherefore, as by one man

22. Chapter 23.

sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:12–14). In short, *no negative sanctions—no law*. The converse is also true: *if negative sanctions, then law*.

Canaan was under covenantal stipulations. This was the judicial basis of God's prophecy against Canaan. Canaan had violated God's law long enough. The day of reckoning had arrived. This implies that Canaanites were under law. Which law? Answer: *covenantal law to which historical sanctions were attached*.

This raises a crucial question: Which covenant? Canaan had not formally covenanted with God as Abram had (Gen. 15:18). Canaanites were not under the law of the covenant in the way that Abraham's heirs were. The transfer of inheritance was nevertheless about to take place based on Canaan's violation of God's law. How could this be?

The answer is found in the Adamic covenant. *There is a universal covenant between God and Adam's heirs*. It operates in history. Societies progress in terms of their conformity to the law of this covenant. Societies also are cut short in history in terms of this law: the second commandment. Moses had just reiterated the second commandment: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Deut. 5:9). This warning was not limited to Israel, since it spoke of God-haters, i.e., covenant-breakers. The second commandment was the judicial basis of the negative sanctions that Israel was about to impose on Canaan: the Canaanites' sincere worship of false gods.

The Adamic covenant has corporate sanctions. It is not just a law governing individuals. Not only do individuals die, civilizations also die. Not only does God kill individuals, He also kills civilizations. God would soon prove this to Canaan and Israel. Deuteronomy, as the book of the inheritance, is both a testament and a testimony to the fact that God kills societies. He executes judgment in history in terms of the Adamic covenant's stipulations. *Adam ate from the forbidden tree; so, Adam's heirs can distinguish good from evil, just as the serpent promised*. They cannot legitimately plead ignorance of the law. That they actively suppress God's truth in unrighteousness, worshipping

the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18–22), testifies to their covenantal knowledge of the truth, not their lack of knowledge.[23]

Any suggestion that God does not hold all mankind responsible for obeying His law must come to grips with the destruction of Canaan. Why did God speak to Abraham of the growing iniquity of the Amorites if there was no ethical standard governing Amorite civilization? Because God brought judgment on Canaan, we must ask: By what standard?

Moses had warned Israel in the passage immediately preceding this one that if Israel worshipped other gods, God would bring the same judgment against Israel that He was about to bring against Canaan (Deut. 8:19–20).[24] By worshipping other gods, men honor the laws of other covenants. Covenants have stipulations. To adopt other laws besides God's law constitutes rebellion.

How can God legitimately hold covenant-breakers in the Adamic sense responsible for breaking a corporate law-order that they have never publicly affirmed? Answer: because they are covenant-breakers in Adam, and they are also covenant-breakers on their own account. Adam and his heirs are under *corporate covenant law* as surely as they are under individual covenant law. Whole societies perish as surely as individuals die. The question then is: How do Adam's heirs know about the law-order under which they operate and for which God holds them corporately responsible? Paul provided the answer: the *work* of the law is written in every person's heart. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean [intervening] while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:14–15). [25]

3. Natural Law and Common Grace

In the history of Western political theory, this judicial knowledge has been referred to as natural law. In one sense, such knowledge is inborn and therefore natural. It is built into the hearts of all ratio-

23. Gary North, *Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans* , 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 3.

24. Chapter 23.

25. On the distinction between the work of the law written in an unregenerate person's heart and the law written in the regenerate person's heart, see John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1965), I, pp. 74–76. Cf. North, *Cooperation and Dominion*, ch. 4.

nal men. In another sense, it is supernatural: as an image of God, each man reflects God. Such knowledge is not sufficient to bring all men to saving faith, but it is sufficient to condemn them before God. Such knowledge is sufficient to enable them to perceive the external requirements of the common law. The question is: Will they obey what they know to be true? The biblical answer is simple: "Only if God gives them the grace to obey." Grace in this sense is an unearned gift from God, i.e., a gift earned by Jesus Christ on the cross, but not earned by the recipients on their own account. Calvinist theologians often call this unearned gift *common grace*. Calvin called it general grace.[26] Common grace enables men to obey at least some of the works of the common law in their hearts. But when this common grace is removed from them in history, societies march into the valley of the shadow of death.

Moses announced that Canaan was nearing the end of its long march to destruction. Those Christians who deny the existence of common grace in history have a major exegetical problem with Israel's conquest of Canaan. Why was Canaan condemned by God? By what standard was Canaan condemned? How had Canaan filled up its cup of iniquity by Joshua's day? What should Christians call those historical means by which God had earlier prevented them from following the dictates of their rebellious hearts? If the cup of iniquity was full in Joshua's day, what had retarded the level of iniquity in Abraham's day? Without the concept of common grace, and specifically *corporate common grace*, these questions are unanswerable covenantally.[27]

Sects that refuse to acknowledge the existence of common grace are unable to develop an explicitly biblical social theory or political theory. They must therefore sit under the academic and judicial tables of covenant-breakers, praying to God that a few scraps will fall from the tables occasionally to feed them (Matt. 15:22–27).[28] They necessarily must view the history of the church as one long march into the shadow of death. They necessarily must adopt a view of Christians as perpetual crumb-eaters in history. In other words, they necessarily must adopt pessimillennialism, either premillennialism or amillenni-

26. John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), II:II:17. Ford Lewis Battles translation, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I:276. See Battles' footnotes on the same page.

27. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

28. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 34.

alism.[29] They must reject an eschatology that insists that Christianity will triumph in history, for such a triumph would mean that the positive sanctions of saving faith are in some way related judicially to the negative sanctions that disinherit covenant-breakers in history. This triumphant scenario raises the issue of corporate common grace and its removal from covenant-breaking societies in history. In short, they cannot explain the covenantal relationship between Israel and Canaan, between Christ and Caesar. So, they simply ignore it.

There is no neutrality. To deny common grace is to affirm a universal common law-order other than God's covenant law. Some law-order must rule society; sanctions must be applied in terms of some system of law. *By denying common grace in history, sectarian Christians necessarily affirm the sovereignty of natural law over God's revealed law*. They affirm the legitimacy of Adamic law over Bible-revealed law. They affirm covenant-breaking man's superior authority to interpret Adamic law apart from God's special grace of biblical revelation. If predictable sanctions in history are not imposed by God in terms of the stipulations of His Bible-revealed law, which has precedence over natural (Adamic) law, then predictable sanctions in history must governed by Adamic common law. One set of sanctions must become dominant in society: either those that are attached to biblical law or those that are understood by covenant-breaking men to be attached to what they regard as uncursed natural law. *There is no equality possible here: one law-order must dominate the others*. The predictability of corporate historical sanctions will be assessed by men in terms of biblical law or natural law or man-made law.

The triumph of Israel over Canaan tells us which law-order is

29. The Protestant Reformed Church openly denies common grace and affirms amillennialism. For a scholarly critique of the anti-postmillennial presentations of the Protestant Reformed Church's senior theologian, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997), Appendix A: "Cultural Antinomianism." That theologian's belated response was a book that did not refer to Gentry's critique, but instead offered a series of brief, unfootnoted chapters that had been editorials in the denomination's magazine. He referred to postmillennialists other than Gentry, and to books other than Gentry's. His book was published nine years after Gentry's original critique in the first edition. David J. Engelsma, *Christ's Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of Reformed Amillennialism* (Redlands, California: Reformed Witness, 2001). The book offered neither a bibliography nor an index. In response to Gary DeMar's criticism that Engelsma never offered footnotes, he insisted that footnotes are not necessary, since the magazine "is written for believers, not for scholars and theologians" (p. 42). This is not the best way to phrase the matter. Are we to conclude that scholars and theologians are not believers? On Engelsma's theology, see Appendix I, subsection on "Amillennialism."

dominant—biblical law—but those who deny common grace do not get the message. They are forced to explain the victory of Israel over Canaan as some sort of anomaly in history. *So also must they explain the victory of Christ over Caesar*, i.e., the replacement of pagan Rome by Christianity. As far as cultural dominance in history is concerned, critics of common grace think that God is on the side of covenant- breakers. Their worldview is straightforward: evil must get more powerful over time, while Christianity must get weaker.[30]

The question then arises: Why should Christians attempt to develop biblical social theory? Isn't this in effect wasted effort eschatologically, an exercise in intellectual futility? By their actions, pessimillennialists and the critics of common grace theology have demonstrated that this is exactly what they believe. They have counted the costs of dominion, which include the personal costs of developing an explicitly biblical social theory. They have compared these estimated costs with the estimated benefits of success. They have weighed in the balance biblical social theory and biblical social action, and they have found both wanting. Why? Because their risk-reward estimates have been affected by their pessimillennialism. They have echoed the 10 spies: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:33). They have made it clear that they believe that in New Covenant history, God is on the side of covenant-breaking societies.

F. Which Side Is God On?

The most important question in estimating the costs of any risky action is this: *Will God be pleased with what I am about to undertake*? To estimate the height of the Anakim was not difficult. The difference in physical stature between the Anakim and the Israelites was obvious. Their eyes told them: seek peace, avoid confrontation. But what they saw was not the heart of the cost-benefit analysis. The heart of the matter was their heart before God. Were they going to believe His promise or their own eyes?

Their problem was this: *rebellious hearts make bad estimates*. After God had told the exodus generation that their representatives' treatment of Joshua and Caleb had doomed them to death in the wilderness, they decided that it was time to march into battle.

30. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 3.

> And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah" (Num. 14:40–45).

Not until the next generation came to maturity did Israel have a victory at Hormah (Num. 21:3).[31]

The Israelites were not supposed to go into battle unless the war had been authorized by the priesthood. The tribes were to march into battle only after the priests had blown the trumpets. "And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations" (Num. 10:8). Bloodshed had to be preceded by the payment of atonement money to the priests (Ex. 30:12–13).[32] Under the Mosaic covenant, the priesthood had the exclusive authority to decide whether God was on the side of Israel. Their declaration alone sanctioned the war in God's eyes; without this sanction, a war should not have been sanctioned in the nation's eyes.

The West has always placed the authority to declare war exclusively in the hands of the national civil government. The churches historically have had no interest in challenging this state of affairs. At most, the medieval church claimed the right to impose a few of the rules of warfare, such as truce days. Today, secular agencies do this, most notably the International Red Cross. Once a war is declared by the government, the churches immediately become vocal supporters of the war effort.[33] There is no further discussion about

31. Gary North, *Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1997] 2012), ch. 12.

32. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), ch. 58.

33. American clerics who opposed America's entry into World War I in 1917 sometimes suffered civil sanctions: arrest and imprisonment. A Church of the Brethren pastor was sent to prison for having recommended to his congregation that they refuse to buy war bonds. He was tried after the armistice in 1918 and sentenced to prison for 10 years, later commuted to a year and a day. H. C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917–1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, [1957] 1968),

the legitimacy of the war. Whatever discussion takes place must take place before the war breaks out. Those who favor peace lose the debate completely on the day that war is declared. All debate ends. One mark of a society that has lost faith in its moral foundations is the existence of such debate after a war begins. For example, in the American Civil War (1861–65), by late 1864, after the fall of the city of Atlanta, when the Confederacy was beginning to be seen by its supporters as a lost cause militarily, a few Southern preachers began to voice doubts about both the moral legitimacy of slavery and the justness of the Confederacy's cause. After the war ended in defeat, almost no Southerner publicly lamented the demise of slavery.[34] The shock of military defeat had changed their minds. Moral legitimacy had been determined on the battlefield; the South's preachers merely reflected the military results.[35]

Conclusion

Moses told the Israelites that the day of the Lord had arrived. It was a day of historical sanctions: positive for Israel and negative for Canaan. While its completion would take place only under Joshua—a six-year day of vengeance—the day had already begun.

The day of the Lord is always a day of sanctions. Moses warned Israel: the fact that God was going to use Israel to bring negative corporate sanctions against Canaanites should not lead them to conclude that they had any legal claim on God based on their own righteousness. They would replace Canaan as God's agents in the land, but their legal claim to the land was based on two things only: God's promise to Abraham and the two-fold boundary that God had placed on Canaan's iniquity, ethical and temporal. God's announcement of "no further dominion" for Canaan was not to be regarded as an

pp. 118–19. As the authors pointed out, clerical opponents of the war were usually from smaller, poorer churches. *Ibid*., p. 117. For publishing an anti-war book on prophecy, *The Finished Mystery*, in July, 1917, eight leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses, including Joseph Rutherford, were sentenced to 20 years in prison in June, 1918, after World War I had ended. A Federal appeals court overturned this decision in 1919. James J. Martin, *An American Adventure in Bookburning In The Style of 1918* (Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles Press, 1989), pp. 16–17. Martin's account is more accurate than Peterson and Fite's (pp. 119–20).

34. One who did was the Presbyterian theologian Robert Dabney. See his book, *A Defence of Virginia [And Through Her, of the South]* (New York: Negro University Press, [1867] 1969).

35. Richard E. Beringer, *et al., Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), ch. 14: "God, Guilt, and the Confederacy in Collapse."

announcement of unconditional dominion for Israel. *Dominion is by covenant, and God's covenant is always ethically conditional*. The covenant has stipulations to which predictable historical sanctions are attached. These sanctions are the basis of extending the inheritance. Canaan had forfeited its inheritance by breaking the Adamic covenant's corporate stipulations. These stipulations were common-grace stipulations.

The Canaanites looked invincible. They were in fact highly vincible. They were guaranteed losers in history, according to the Abrahamic promise, which was in fact an integral aspect of the Abrahamic covenant. This promise was a prophecy regarding the temporal limits of corporate rebellion. Canaan's transgression of the Adamic covenant's boundaries would bring predictable negative sanctions in history. The prediction was the Abrahamic promise: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).

25

SONSHIP, SERVITUDE, AND INHERITANCE

I prayed therefore unto the Lord*, and said, O Lord* God*, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the* Lord *was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.*

DEUTERONOMY 9:26–29

The theocentric reference point here is God's legal status as Israel's owner. Israel was God's inheritance, i.e., His property. To the extent that Israel extended its national inheritance, God would extend His. This relationship was representative. Israel was required to act as God's agent, even as Adam was required to act as God's agent. The issue here was ethics. Moses had begged God not to judge Israel in terms of the ethical rebellion of Israel: "the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin." Moses had reminded God that the *legal* basis of sonship is God's *promise* of sonship. "Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The *ethical* basis of sonship is *obedience*, which was why Israel had been in such great trouble.[1]

1. The ethical basis of sonship is why God's ethically flawless son had to die as the legal representative for all of God's adopted sons. This is presumed by the entire history of the covenant, but it is not stated here.

A. Moses as the Replacement Patriarch

Moses summarized here the results of his verbal exchange with God in Exodus 32, when God had offered to establish Moses as the patriarch of a new nation. That exchange had involved God's offer of sonship to Moses, in effect making him a new Abraham.

> And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people (Ex. 32:9–14).

Moses had immediately interceded with God by appealing to God's reputation. If God slew Israel, the Egyptians would say that He could not deliver on His promises. This would tarnish God's reputation, Moses implied. Moses appealed to the integrity of God's name, not to the non-existent integrity of Israel. God honored this appeal to His own honor. He spared Israel.

God had promised Moses an inheritance: a new nation. As the patriarch of such a nation, Moses would be acclaimed and honored. In response, Moses reminded God that it was God's honor that was primary. As the patriarch of a new nation, Moses would gain the authority to direct their future, to lead them in the paths that he would choose. In effect, this new nation would become Moses' servant, his inheritance. His name would be on them. Moses would in fact replace Abraham as the founding patriarch, for the promise to Abraham would be broken by the destruction of Israel. Either Israel would not conquer in the fourth generation, contrary to God's promise (Gen. 15:16),[2] or else Abraham's name would be extended in history only by Moses' adopting a new nation. But that would have violated Jacob's promise regarding Judah's bearing of the sword until Shiloh came (Gen. 49:10).

2. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

Moses countered God's offer by invoking the names of the patriarchs with whom God had made His covenant. That is, he appealed to God's word. Finally, in the speech to the conquest generation, he said that he had told God that Israel was God's inheritance (Deut. 9:26, 29). To have given Moses a completely new inheritance, God would have had to *disinherit Israel* completely. That would have been the same as *disinheriting His own word*, Moses implied. This argument saved Israel, which remained God's inheritance.

B. God's Name Was on Israel

God had placed His name on the Israelites through His covenant with Abraham. He had changed Abram's name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5). Similarly, he had changed Jacob's name to Israel (Gen. 32:28). The authority to name someone is a mark of foundational authority. Adam named the animals (Gen. 2:19); then he named Eve (Gen. 2:23). In both cases, God had brought to Adam the living objects to be named. Adam was the father of the human race. God had created Adam, marking God as mankind's father. God's authority was higher than Adam's, for He had created Adam and had named Adam. In this judicial sense, *God's name was on Adam*.

Because God had delegated to Adam authority over the creation (Gen. 1:26),[3] He had Adam name the living creatures under his immediate authority. So, God's name was on the creation directly, for He had created it, yet it was also on the creation indirectly, because Adam had named the animals, and His name was on Adam. The world is therefore God's lawful inheritance, both directly and indirectly. God's authority is both direct (providential) and indirect (covenantal). That is to say, His authority is simultaneously unmediated and mediated. This is why the Bible affirms God's absolute predestination and man's full responsibility for his own actions. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22).

God had disinherited Adam by cursing his body and the ground for his transgression (Gen. 3:17–19)[4] and casting him out of the garden (Gen. 3:24). But before issuing His curse, God had promised the serpent that Eve would have an heir who would bring negative sanctions against the serpent's seed (Gen. 3:15). God did not execute Adam on the day of Adam's transgression, for to have done so

3. *Ibid*., ch. 3.
4. *Ibid*., ch. 11.

would have cut off Adam's seed. This would have made impossible the promised seed's ability to bring sanctions against the seed of the serpent. God extended common grace—a gift unmerited by the recipients—in the form of extended life and dominion in history to the serpent, to Eve, and to Adam. He did this for the sake of the promised seed.[5] This seed was Jesus Christ, who would inherit through Abraham. Paul wrote: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

God's name is on God's Son. His Son was incarnate in history in the person of Jesus Christ. God's name was therefore also on Abraham, for through Abraham would God's incarnate Son come in history. There was no escape from this judicial naming. As surely as the promised seed would come in history to crush the head of the serpent, so was God's name on Abraham and his descendants. As surely as Adam was God's servant, so were Abraham and his descendants God's servants. This office of *servantship* was in fact *sonship*. God told Moses: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). But how had Israel been restored to sonship after God's disinheritance of Adam? Through covenantal adoption.

> Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live (Ezek. 16:1–6).

Israel was God's inheritance because His name was on Israel through adoption. God had named Jacob Israel, which reflected His position as Israel's adopter. God's inheritance was His possession. The entire nation was spoken of by Moses as being God's inheritance. It was this *judicial claim* by God on national Israel which alone

5. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), pp. 57–59.

had saved Israel from God's wrath. By invoking the legal language of inheritance, Moses had stayed the hand of God at the time of the golden calf. Now Moses reminded his listeners of their position as God's inheritance. But this inheritance was reciprocal. God became Israel's inheritance. Moses stated this explicitly with respect to the Levites, who had no landed inheritance in Mosaic Israel. "Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him" (Deut. 10:9). What was true of Levi as the priesthood of Israel in relation to the other tribes was also true of Israel as the priesthood of humanity in relation to the other nations.

C. From Servitude to Sonship

This judicial position of being God's inheritance is a position of blessedness. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Ps. 33:12). Nevertheless, to be part of another person's inheritance is to be his slave. Possessing such an inheritance down through the generations was lawful in Israel under the jubilee code, but this inter-generational slavery was limited to heathen slaves who had begun their term of bondage when they were outside of the national covenant. "Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour" (Lev. 25:44–46).[6]

This Mosaic law revealed a covenantal principle: better to be a slave in the household of faith than to be a free man outside the covenant. This principle did not end with Jesus' fulfillment of the jubilee law (Luke 4:18–21).[7] Its administration did, however. Under the New Covenant, the highest ideal is liberty: "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it

6. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus* 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 30.

7. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 6.

rather" (I Cor. 7:21).[8] This liberty is possible because the covenant of redemption is no longer tied exclusively or uniquely to membership in any geographically and historically bounded nation. The mediatory status of national Israel in the Mosaic covenant of redemption is forever annulled. Old Covenant Israel is no longer God's son. Old Covenant Israel was *definitively* disinherited at the crucifixion: the veil of the temple separating the holy of holies from the common area was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:52). Old Covenant Israel was *progressively* disinherited through its persecution of the New Testament church, and *finally* disinherited at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. After that, Old Covenant Israel ended.[9] Its successor, Rabbinic Judaism, possesses neither a temple nor an animal sacrifice system. The covenantally valid sacrificial fires of the temple were extinguished forever when the unauthorized fire lit by a pair of Roman soldiers burned the temple to the ground after the siege of Jerusalem ended.[10] The Mosaic covenant has been forever annulled.

Under the Mosaic covenant, servanthood was a blessing because it was a form of preliminary sonship. The possibility of redemption from bondage was always present through adoption by another Israelite.[11] Meanwhile, the servant was under the household covenant of the master. This brought blessings that were not available outside the household of faith.

The Mosaic covenant was itself a form of sonship that involved servantship. The transfer of the inheritance from *father to son* was marked by a change in practical status from *servant to son*. We see this illustrated in the New Covenant's replacement of the Old Covenant. Because the New Covenant has replaced the Old Covenant, covenant-keeping gentiles can become sons.

> For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed

8. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 8.

9. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

10. *Ibid.*, ch. 23.

11. North, *Boundaries and Dominion*, ch. 29:K.

> of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Gal. 3:26–4:7).

With the advent of the Son of God in history, Israel was offered its long-awaited opportunity to move from inheritance-servitude to inheritance-sonship. The price of this transition was two-fold: (1) Israel's public acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah; (2) Israel's public consent to the extension of adoptive sonship status to the prodigal sons, i.e., the gentiles. But Old Covenant Israel, like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:28), was hard-hearted. The older brother in the parable complained to his father that the father had never slain a fatted calf for him. Where was his reward as the firstborn son?[12] This was Israel's constant complaint to God. "Where is our reward? We have been faithful. Where is our fatted calf?" Moses warned them in this passage: with the golden calf in Israel's background, they should all be content with the fact that God had not slain the nation at the foot of the altar.

A recurring theme in the Old Covenant is the rebelliousness of the older brother, whose inheritance ordinarily was the double portion (Deut. 21:17).[13] Instead, the younger son inherited because of the older brother's rebellion, e.g., Seth over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, Ephraim over Manasseh, David over Eliab, and ultimately Jesus over Adam. *The rebellious firstborn resents the faithful second-born*. "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle" (I Sam. 17:28). Then the younger brother inherits through his covenantal faithfulness.

The Jews should have remembered all this when Jesus told His parable of the prodigal younger brother who repented and the stiff-necked older brother who complained. The older brother refused to rejoice with his father at the return of the younger brother in humility.

12. North, *Treasure and Dominion*, ch. 37.
13. Chapter 49.

His father's joy meant nothing to him; he cared only about the honor shown to his prodigal brother. His brother's humility had regained his access to the household and its rewards. What was the public mark of his brother's humility? His willingness to enter his father's household as a servant, not as a son (Luke 15:21). He understood that servantship is preferable to life outside the household of faith. This realization is the only basis of a return to sonship for prodigal sons. The sons of Adam are all prodigal sons.

Conclusion

Moses designated Israel as God's inheritance. The Israelites' status as God's inheritance placed them in the judicial position of servants, yet also as lawful sons. They owed God service, for the inheritance is lawfully at the disposal of the heir. They were also subordinate to God as the lawful heir. This is why Jesus' parable of the servants who kill the heir of the master so outraged the Jews (Matt. 21:38–46).[14]

The inheritance does not exercise authority over its owner. Moses made it clear to them that their status as God's inheritance placed them in a special judicial position: subordinate. What he did not say, but which was implied by biblical theology, is this: *legitimate sonship always begins with servantship* (Gal. 4:1–7). Even sin-free Adam was not allowed to touch all of God's inheritance. *Servantship is the training required of all lawful sons*. As the inheritance of God, Israel could prove its legal status as the son of God. Israel would then inherit the kingdom of God. The implied warning was clear: should Israel rebel against its judicial status as God's inheritance—as bondservants in the household of faith—God would disinherit Israel, just as He had threatened to do after the golden calf incident. Next time, there might not be a Moses to plead with God for mercy.

14. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 43.

26

SONSHIP, OBEDIENCE, AND IMMIGRATION

> *And now, Israel, what doth the* Lord *thy God require of thee, but to fear the* Lord *thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the* Lord *thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the* Lord*, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the* Lord*'s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the* Lord *had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 10:12–16

The fear of God is the theocentric focus of this passage. The decisive issue here is obedience. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways."

A. The Covenantal Function of Fear

Covenantal faithfulness begins with fear (Prov. 9:10). Fear, obedience, and love were united in this passage. Israel was told to obey God. The basis of this fear was legally grounded in God's status as Creator: "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is." The passage's logic is sharp: *from man's obedience to God's ownership*. Man's absolute obedience is required by God because God is the absolute owner of the universe. This ownership included Israel, which owed a special debt to God as God's chosen nation. "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day" (v. 15). God's cosmic ownership identifies this

law as a universal law. It was not a seed law or a land law.[1]

The fourth generation would soon be circumcised at Gilgal (Josh. 5:7). The circumcision of their flesh would visibly bond them with Abraham, but this circumcision of their flesh would not be sufficient to maintain the kingdom grant. They would have to obey God's law. Moses referred to this as the circumcision of the heart.

Paul made extensive use of this metaphor in his development of the New Covenant's extension of the Old Covenant's promises and inheritance to the gentiles. The central issue is ethics, Paul insisted, not circumcision. "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:25–29). This is exactly what Moses told them in this passage. It is not who you are but *what you do* that determines how God deals with you. God does not regard persons in declaring His formal judgments. "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" (Deut. 10:17).

B. Sonship and Inheritance

Moses was making a crucial covenantal observation. It was in fact the most important aspect of the Mosaic Covenant: *the mark of true sonship is the circumcised heart*.[2] Ethics is more important than ritual. The true son is the son who obeys his father. It was this message that the Israelites forgot or denied by their actions, generation after generation,

1. On land laws and seed laws, see Appendix J.

2. In defense of my estimation of the centrality of this passage, I cite Paul. "Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:26–29).

culminating in the nation's consummate rebellion: the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jesus drove home Moses' message in his parable of the two sons: "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him" (Matt. 21:28–32). The true Son of God, the true heir of Abraham, was murdered by the would-be heirs. Jesus' next parable revealed that He knew exactly what they would do to Him: the parable of the husbandmen who killed the heir (Matt. 21:33–46).

Circumcision was the physical mark of subordination to the Mosaic covenant. Circumcision was the Old Covenant's oath-sign.[3] Every biblical covenant must be ratified by an oath, and this oath invokes negative sanctions on the covenant-breaker.[4] The negative sanction of the cutting of the flesh was the judicial equivalent of invoking negative sanctions on the oath-taker for disobeying God's law. The covenant's oath-sign invokes positive and negative historical sanctions in terms of the covenant's stipulations. Circumcision did not guarantee Israel's inheritance; it merely invoked positive sanctions for obedience, which in turn would ensure the inheritance.

Moses was warning his listeners: *obedience to God was a more important sign of sonship than circumcision was*. Circumcision invoked God's sanctions, but these sanctions were applied in terms of God's law. Point four of the biblical covenant model—oath/sanctions—refers the oath-taker back to point three: ethics. The physical mark of the Old Covenant was circumcision. But the other visible mark was of much greater importance: obedience to the law. *Circumcision without obedience brings God's negative sanctions*. Jesus warned: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he

3. Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1968), ch. 3.

4. *Ibid*., pp. 40–43.

that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:19–21).[5] Circumcision without obedience was a curse, not a blessing.

Moses' words in this passage reflect the biblical covenant model. God, as the sovereign owner of heaven and earth (point one), established His covenant with representatives (point two): the patriarchs of Israel. He has placed Israel under His law (point three), to which are attached sanctions (point four). These sanctions are invoked by circumcision; they are applied by God in terms of obedience or disobedience. Corporate inheritance is the ultimate positive sanction in history: the kingdom of God on earth.

> His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (Ps. 25:13).
>
> For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9).
>
> But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps. 37:11).
>
> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).[6]

While Israel's inheritance is not specifically mentioned in this passage, this is the central theme of the Deuteronomy. Moses did identify that generation as part of Abraham's promised seed, "even you above all people, as it is this day" (v. 15).

Israel could not rely on circumcision as the judicial basis of its national inheritance. Maintaining the kingdom grant is always an ethical task.[7] Israel's rituals were symbols of cleansing and restoration, but they were useless if they were not accompanied by a change of heart and behavior. Circumcision would condemn Israel if the nation committed the sins of Canaan. Circumcision would bring the Mosaic covenant's negative corporate sanctions. Deuteronomy is the second reading of the law because *the Mosaic law was the written testament that specified the terms of the national inheritance*.

C. Sons and Strangers

Sons inherit; strangers in the household do not. This had been Abram's dilemma. "And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give

5. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 18.

6. *Ibid*., ch. 4.

7. James B. Jordan, *Covenant Sequence in Leviticus and Deuteronomy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), p. 9.

me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen. 15:2). The judicial question is this: Who is the true son with a lawful claim on the inheritance?

The true sons of God are those who obey Him. This fact raised a major question for Israel, one which they never answered correctly: Can a stranger become a son? The answer was covenantally obvious, but it was repulsive to Israel: yes. The stranger, if he acts as a son should act, is entitled to become the lawful heir. The son, if he acts as a stranger to the covenant, is to be disinherited (Matt. 21:28–32).

Adopted sons replace biological sons as the lawful heirs. *This is the message of the New Covenant*. The gentiles could become sons on the same basis that the Jews could: obedience to God's covenant, i.e., adoption. This obedience is imputed by God to adopted sons on the judicial basis of Christ's perfect ethical fulfillment of the criteria of sonship. Both Jews and gentiles need adoption, Paul wrote to the Galatians: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:4–6). Adoption had always been open to gentiles in Israel, but it took up to 10 generations for the heirs of some strangers to achieve this (Deut. 23:3). Under the New Covenant, adoption required a new oath-sign, baptism, and a new Passover, the Lord's Supper. As had been the case with the Mosaic Covenant's rituals, these new oath-bound rituals were not to be regarded as substitutes for obedience.

> And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (I John 2:3–4).
>
> And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (I John 3:22).
>
> And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (I John 3:24).
>
> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments (I John 5:2).

The true son does the will of his father. By identifying a man's works, others can identify his covenantal father. This covenantal con-

cept of sonship was why the circumcised stranger was a threat to the self-esteem of covenant-breaking Israelites. The visible obedience of covenant-keeping strangers testified against the sonship of covenant-breaking Israelites.

Those who were the biological heirs of the conquest generation had an inheritance in the land. Immigrant strangers could not inherit rural land except through their adoption into a family line of the conquest generation. But they could buy houses in the cities (Lev. 25:29–30), and they could become full citizens in the cities after several consecutive generations of circumcised heads of households. They could become full sons of the covenant even though they could not inherit rural land. This eventually placed a heavy social and psychological premium on the possession of a claim to rural land. Land rather than ethics became the chief differentiating factor in the minds of covenant-breaking heirs of the conquest generation.

D. Sacrosanct Land

The land became sacrosanct in the thinking of those Israelites who placed formal title to land above obedience as the true mark of sonship. "The land, the land" became their cry. The supreme mark of their disinheritance would be their removal from the land. Recognizing this sinful outlook in advance, Moses warned: "And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind" (Deut. 28:63–65).

Assyria removed Israelites from the land in the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. In 586 B.C., Babylon removed most of those living in the Southern Kingdom.[8] A comparative handful returned from the Babylonian captivity in 538; the vast majority remained behind in Babylon. Moses saw this, too. "And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou

8. Not all, however: "But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left certain of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen" (Jer. 52:16).

wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God" (Deut. 28:62). Only a remnant returned to Israel, as Jeremiah had foretold: "And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase" (Jer. 23:3). Rome removed most of them permanently from the land in 135 A.D. after Simon bar Kochba's abortive rebellion (132–35).[9] The diaspora had begun.

Without the laying on of hands (*semikah*), which could be done lawfully only inside the boundaries of the land of Israel, a Jewish court under Phariseeism had no authority to impose the punishments mandated in the Bible. The development of an alternative system of sanctions became a major task of Judaism after the failure of Bar Kochba's rebellion and the forced dispersion of the Jews by the Roman authorities.[10] The problem of rule outside the land had appeared earlier, however, with the destruction of the temple. The holiness of Israel could no longer be based on the presence of the temple in the land. *The Jews became in their own eyes the holiness of God, replacing the temple*. This meant that all Jews everywhere participated in this holiness. To attest to this separate judicial condition of holiness, they needed to be judged by Jewish law, and this law could invoke sanctions that were valid only inside the boundaries of Israel.

The holiness of the Jews had been a major doctrine of the Pharisees even before A.D. 70. This placed the Pharisees in a dominant position within Judaism after A.D. 70.[11] The Romans placed Gamaliel at the head of the Jews' local system of patriarchal rule.[12] From the fall of Jerusalem until Bar Kochba's rebellion, the Jewish leaders began the work of codifying the Pharisees' oral law, but it remained oral.[13] The greatest early codifier was Rabbi Akiba, born around A.D. 50, who as an old man died at the hands of the Romans after the failure of Bar Kochba's rebellion, which Akiba had supported.[14] He had publicly identified Bar

9. Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz reported that Bar Kochba persecuted no one except Jewish Christians, who refused to take up arms against Rome. Heinrich Graetz, *A History of the Jews*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893), II, p. 412.

10. George Horowitz, *The Spirit of Jewish Law* (New York: Central Book Co., [1953] 1973), p. 93.

11. Jacob Neusner, *An Introduction to Judaism: A Textbook and Reader* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 160–61.

12. *Ibid*., p. 159. This Gamaliel was the son of Paul's teacher: Paul Johnson, *A History of The Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 150.

13. *Ibid*., p. 158.

14. Ernest R. Trattner, *Understanding the Talmud* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1955), pp. 101–102.

Kochba as the Messiah.[15] Late in the second century A.D., Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi ("the Prince" or "the Patriarch") completed the codification of the Pharisees' oral tradition. This was the Mishnah.[16] The Talmud, a detailed and seemingly unstructured series of comments on the Mishnah, was completed in Babylon around A.D. 500.[17]

These developments, which sealed off Judaism from the surrounding Roman culture, moved in a direction opposite from developments in the early church. The New Testament's inclusion of gentiles into the kingdom's inheritance was an extension of Moses' original principle of sonship through obedience. Baptism merely speeded up the process of inclusion: from several generations (Deut. 23:3–8) to immediate covenantal membership. Inclusion became definitive at the time of baptism; the Mosaic law's multi-generation progressive inclusion process for immigrants was annulled along with the jubilee law.

E. Visible Economic Evidence of Civil Justice

Moses went from a warning regarding stiffnecked rebellion to a discussion of God as the judge: "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" (Deut. 10:17). Here is a God to be feared. He cannot be bought off. An attempted bribe brings no benefits in God's court.

The proof of God's imperviousness to any attempt to deflect His judgment is His treatment of those who are in no position to offer a bribe. God executes righteous judgment for the afflicted: orphans, widows, and strangers. "He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (v. 18). These three groups were the Mosaic law's symbols—its representatives—of the judicially defenseless in Israel. Members of these groups could not execute judgment in Israel. Who, then, would represent them in a court of law? God would, Moses warned. And since He would, His earthly judges had better do the same. "Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (v. 19). By reminding them of their stay in Egypt, Moses recalled the penalty of injustice: national destruction. He also reminded them of the positive historical sanctions shown by God to covenant-keepers who are unrighteously afflicted by covenant-breakers: "Thy fathers went down

15. *Ibid.*, p. 137. The source for this is the Jerusalem Talmud, Ta'an 4:7, 68d.
16. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, II, pp. 460–61.
17. Trattner, *Understanding the Talmud*, p. 55.

into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude" (v. 22).

This was a clear prophecy of what would happen to Israel if the nation's leaders handed down corrupt judgments that respected persons or bribes. *Israel's experience would recapitulate Egypt's experience*. If Israel's judges did not honor the rule of law in its courts, treating strangers the same as Israelites, then Israel would be brought low.

Israel had been a stranger in Egypt. At first, Egypt had treated Israel well. This had been manifested by Pharaoh's elevation of Joseph as second in command. Egypt had survived the famine because the Pharaoh had honored Joseph's advice. Egypt received a blessing through the stranger in her midst. Had Pharaoh returned Joseph to prison, where he had been brought under negative judicial sanctions unrighteously by Potiphar, Egypt would have suffered a disaster. Egypt's treatment of this stranger within her gates would determine Egypt's fate.

In a later generation, a new Pharaoh brought the Israelites under bondage. This arrangement seemed to be profitable for a time. The Pharaoh gained the benefit of cheap slave labor for at least a generation. But this could not become a permanent relationship under the law of God. The debt relationship for this evil—the negative sanctions—compounded over time. The debts came due at the exodus. Egypt was destroyed.

When had Israel's population growth taken place? During the good times, the days of liberty in Egypt. The multiplication of Israel was what had frightened the Pharaoh of the oppression (Ex. 1:9). That is, strangers flourished in Egypt. This is an important mark of a righteous society: *strangers flourish*. The rule of law, if the law is just, provides the judicial framework for economic growth. Immigrants are notoriously thrifty and hard working compared to those who stayed behind in the old country. What we call the Puritan work ethic, which includes future-orientation and thrift, enables immigrants to prosper. A society that oppresses strangers is unjust. The blessings of justice can be seen in communities of immigrants who prosper and eventually grow wealthy enough to move out of their cultural ghettos in a generation or two. This has been the experience of the United States.[18] It has made the United States unique in modern history, especially prior to 1924, when the immigration laws were drastically tightened.[19]

18. Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

19. America's problem, unlike Mosaic Israel's, is that the civil oath does not pledge citizens to obedience to God and God's revealed law. Thus, the immigrant can gain citizenship

Moses warned Israel to deal justly with orphans, widows, and strangers. Yet if Israel did this, resident aliens would flourish economically according to their talents and their work ethic. If Israelites resented their success, as Egyptians had resented Israel's success, and began dishonoring God's law by perverting justice to strangers, then the days of vengeance would come. On the other hand, Israel's covenantal success would be manifested by the economic success of resident aliens. The Mosaic law even provided for the sale of poor Israelites into household servitude to resident aliens (Lev. 25:47–52). *The sign of God's blessing would be rich strangers in the land*. To attempt to tear them down through judicial discrimination would call forth God's judgment against the nation.

The essence of envy is the desire to tear down someone else merely because he is superior. Envy was the motivation of the Philistines in filling in Isaac's wells with dirt (Gen. 26:15).[20] They did not confiscate these wells for their own use; instead, they destroyed his inheritance from his father. They were not made richer, but Isaac was made poorer. This is the heart, mind, and soul of envy. When a society compromises the rule of law in order to tear down economically successful people, it kills the judicial goose that lays the golden eggs. When a society knows this and does it anyway, it has become consumed with envy. Its earthly reward will be an increase in judicial arbitrariness, bureaucracy, and poverty, as well as class resentment. It will grow worse, for the sin of envy cannot be placated. There is always someone who is superior in some respect.[21]

F. The Open Invitation

The uncircumcised alien could prosper in Israel when God's law was enforced. This was another indication to Israel that physical circumcision was not the heart of the matter; ethical circumcision was. *The covenantal issue was obedience to God's law*. If a resident alien producer served Israelite customers efficiently, he would prosper. The Mosaic

---

while maintaining the religious oath which he brought with him. Because Western nations impose only secular oaths on their citizens, immigrants who retain their alien religious oaths undermine the remnants of the Christian social order that created the West. They are allowed to impose political sanctions in terms of religious worldviews hostile to Christianity. The experiment in secular civil government is not yet completed. It will end badly.

20. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 27.

21. Helmut Schoeck, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, [1966] 1969), pp. 251, 336. The novel by L. P. Hartley, *Facial Justice*, is a classic statement of the insatiable nature of envy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960).

law invited aliens to come to Israel and serve those living in Israel by producing on a free market. The Mosaic law's promise of equal justice would recruit productive people to Israel—clearly a benefit to customers in Israel. Political envy and jealousy were held at bay by the Mosaic law. *The stranger's wealth would not be extracted from him by coercive, arbitrary civil laws*. Private property would be secure when the Mosaic law was enforced.

This open invitation to immigrate to Israel was a means of increasing Israel's wealth. Attracting productive people is even better than discovering valuable raw materials. Human creativity is more valuable in the long run than raw materials are, whose prices tend to fall in relationship to the price of labor in a growing economy.[22] Again and again in history, societies that find themselves in possession of valuable raw materials have fallen behind economically within a century or less because governments extract the mineral wealth. The state grows larger, strangling the productivity of its citizens. The monarchy of Spain after 1500 is the classic example. It controlled access in and out of its American empire. It controlled the choke points of commerce. This way, the king made sure that he received his 20% share of the precious metals mined in his American colonies.[23] Spain's government and monopoly controlled all aspects of commerce.[24] Spain's monarchs misjudged the source of Spain's continuing wealth. The goose that would lay the most golden eggs in the Americas was not Spain's mining monopoly; rather, it was the system of economic liberty that prevailed above the Rio Grande River. Curtis Nettels, a specialist in American colonial history, concluded regarding South America: "In the end the stifling effects of regulation contributed a major cause of the successful revolt of the colonies during the Napoleonic wars."[25]

Spain enjoyed the wealth of the South American and Mexican gold mines for almost two centuries, but by the end of the seventeenth century, Spain's economy had visibly begun to fall behind England's and even the Netherlands', whose national income rested on trade rather than mining. The absence of gold mining above the Rio Grande in early North America made its economic triumph far more likely in the long run. Men seeking liberty and individual economic opportunity

22. Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

23. Curtis P. Nettels, *The Roots of American Civilization*, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), p. 43.

24. *Ibid*., p. 45.

25. *Ibid*., p. 47.

came by the tens of millions to the United States. Liberty made the difference economically, not gold. A nation's gold mines eventually run out; liberty need not run out. Whether it does or doesn't depends on a society's ethics.

G. Immigration and Membership Oaths

The possibility of immigration raised the issue of economic inheritance. Strangers in Israel could become legal heirs through adoption by Israelite families. Blood-line inheritance was not the basis of the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant was not a blood-line covenant. It was an ethical-judicial covenant. Men were by oath consigned, not by blood consigned. Israelites could not lawfully pass laws or make judicial decisions that discriminated against strangers. They could not lawfully place discriminatory judicial penalties on strangers. Legislated envy was illegal in Israel. The gentile had a protected position in Israel's legal code. He could buy a lawful inheritance inside Israel's walled cities (Lev. 25:29–30). Ultimately, he had a possibility of becoming a co-heir through adoption.

One mark of a free society is that strangers can flourish economically. The encouragement of immigration is part of biblical law. The problem comes when the national civil covenant establishes citizenship apart from a confession of faith, i.e., a covenantal oath of allegiance to the God of the Bible and His law. When inheritance is by mere physical presence, or by a pledge of allegiance to a secular state, immigration becomes a covenantal threat to those who are already dwelling in the land. When the state is used as a means of coercive wealth distribution—e.g., the modern welfare state—then the immigrant becomes an economic threat to taxpaying citizens: a potential drain on their wealth. Initially, he receives resources from the state because he is poor. Later, his children can become citizens and vote for additional support from the state.

The ultimate form of immigration is birth. The abortion movement in the United States was founded on class hatred by dedicated racists and eugenicists such as Margaret Sanger, who cried out against the foreign-born working class because its members were "benign imbeciles, who encourage the defective and diseased elements of humanity in their reckless and irresponsible swarming."[26] "More children from

26. Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (New York: Brentano's, 1922), p. 125; cited in George Grant, *Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood* (Franklin, Tennessee: Adroit Press, 1992), p. 27. Sanger's book is on the Web.

the fit, less from the unfit" she declared; "that is the chief issue of birth control."[27] Sanger and her ideological associates wanted to reduce the flow of immigrants, who were crossing borders and crossing birth canals. The first step in their legislative agenda was achieved through the legalization of birth control devices: the elimination of a negative judicial sanction on voluntary exchange. The second was the 1924 United States immigration law: the imposition of new negative sanctions against immigrants. The third was the legalization of abortion by the United States Supreme Court in 1973: the removal of negative sanctions against abortionists and the imposition of permanent negative sanctions against infants.

H. Adoption in Family, Church, and State

Biblical inheritance is by sonship. Sonship is attained by means of covenant oath and obedience. Biblically speaking, sonship is legally open to anyone who is willing to affirm the covenantal oath: in family, church, and state. The biblical model for sonship is adoption.

In family affairs, the head of the household initiates the adoption offer at his discretion. Adopted sonship is not automatically granted to everyone who seeks it. The family is a private institution grounded in biology (Gen. 2:24) as well as by a covenant oath of mutual intimacy and sexual exclusivity. With respect to the Adamic family's civil status, the terms of its confession are private even though the state lawfully regulates certain aspects of membership, such as its biological heterosexuality, and also enforces inheritance. No child is a bastard under biblical civil law on the basis of his married parents' refusal to confess the faith established by God's law for the two other public covenantal institutions, church and state. Neither is a child who was not born into a family entitled to membership merely because he confesses a married couple's confession. Family covenant membership is automatic through birth.[28] There must not be legal discrimination against the *Adamic covenant family* based on the issue of confessional content other than the promise of exclusive mutual bonding. This is not true of church and state.

In church and state, an open membership offer—the offer of adop-

27. Sanger, "Birth Control," *Birth Control Review* (May 1919); cited in *idem*.

28. What distinguishes the Christian family from the Adamic family is infant baptism. Children are supposed to be baptized as infants, thereby transferring to the institutional church covenantal authority over the children through the parents. Baptists and non-Christians deny the validity of this legal arrangement.

tion—is automatically extended to the general public with the original incorporation of either of these covenantal organizations. Church and state are public monopolies: the monopoly of the sacraments and the monopoly of life-threatening violence. God has established rules governing both of these monopolistic institutions. Those people who have gained early access to the benefits of membership are not allowed by God to close these benefits to newcomers. Membership in both covenantal organizations is open to all comers on the original terms of the covenant. In neither church nor state are officers allowed by God to discriminate against anyone who seeks membership by means of a covenant oath. Trinitarian Protestant churches have violated God's law in the past, for local congregations for generations screened members by race. So has an anti-immigration Trinitarian state. So has anyone who seeks to substitute a covenantal oath in either institution that denies the theology of the Athanasian creed. Public sonship is by public Trinitarian oath. To substitute a new oath is to substitute a new covenant.[29]

This does not mean that Christians' opposition to immigration is illegitimate when the state has adopted a non-Trinitarian confession. Christians may legitimately seek to substitute a Trinitarian covenant, which will require votes. If they see that certain immigrants who confess a rival and highly aggressive religion are becoming eligible for citizenship, then as a defensive political strategy for the sake of the extension of the kingdom of God, they may legitimately seek to work politically to cut off such immigration as part of their goal of establishing a Trinitarian confession for the nation. But for those Christians who deny the legitimacy of a Christian nation—the vast majority of Protestant Christians today—any opposition to immigration is made in terms of non-confessional considerations. This constitutes discrimination based on economic, racial, or other considerations. The Bible condemns all such judicial discrimination except against citizens of enemy nations during a declared war, which would in effect constitute an invasion, or against immigrants afflicted with contagious deadly diseases, which would also constitute an invasion.

Conclusion

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is also the beginning of wealth. The circumcision of the heart—obedience to God—is

29. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), Part 3.

the basis of maintaining God's inheritance and expanding it. *The circumcised heart is the mark of legitimate sonship*.

This opened the possibility of inheritance to strangers in Mosaic Israel. The immigrant, if he consented to circumcision, could look forward to urban citizenship for his heirs. Even if he remained uncircumcised, he was entitled to civil justice in terms of the Mosaic law. The rule of law mandated by God: "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you" (Ex. 12:49).[30] The Mosaic law's protection of private property was universal.

This was a major incentive for productive strangers to immigrate to Israel. They could enjoy the fruits of their labor despite their alien legal status. There is no question that this aspect of the Mosaic law was an aspect of Israel's evangelism to the world (Deut. 4:5–8).[31]

30. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 14.

31. Chapter 8.

27

OATH, SANCTIONS, AND INHERITANCE

> *Thou shalt fear the* LORD *thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen. Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the* LORD *thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 10:20–22

The theocentric focus of this passage is the fear of God, the God who does terrible (fearful)[1] things. The overall context of this passage is obedience. "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 10:12). The verse following this passage reinforces this ethical theme. "Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway" (Deut. 11:1).

A. Fulfilled Promises

God is sovereign over history, as Israel's history had demonstrated. Such fear should lead to *covenantal swearing*, Moses said: "to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name." Because of the presence of a covenantal oath, this law is a universal law. It was not a seed law or land law, although it had to do with the inheritance of Canaan. It has to do with inheritance in general because the passage assumes the presence of a covenantal oath.

Israel's oath-bound covenantal subordination had resulted in the

1. The Hebrew word for fear (v. 20) and terrible (v. 21) is the same.

fulfillment of two of God's three promises to Abraham. First, the promise of numerous descendants: "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5). The second promise had also been fulfilled: collecting the inheritances of Egypt's firstborn. "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (vv. 13–14). The third prophetic promise had not yet been fulfilled when Moses spoke to the elders of Israel, but it soon would be: the inheritance of Canaan. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (v. 16).

The fulfillment of the first two promises was supposed to produce confidence in the fulfillment of the third: national inheritance. The fulfillment of all three promises was supposed to motivate the nation to even greater covenantal faithfulness. "Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway" (Deut. 11:1). Joshua and the older members of his generation as children had seen God's historical sanctions on Egypt; the younger members and their children had not. "And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm, And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land" (vv. 2–3). God had destroyed Egypt's army by burying them all in the Red Sea (v. 4); He destroyed Dathan and Abiram by having the earth swallow them (v. 6). The older members had seen all this with their own eyes (v. 7). This was supposed to make the conquest generation obedient. "Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it" (v. 8). The sight of God's sanctions in history is to become a means of covenantal reinforcement.

B. Eschatological Inheritance

The exodus generation would have to inherit, as Abraham had inherited, through their heirs. They had been told this a generation earlier. "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them

will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised" (Num. 14:31). The exodus generation had to content itself with inheriting *eschatologically*. Their victorious heirs would represent them. They would achieve their victory through their heirs, just as God had promised mankind in His curse on the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

Eschatological inheritance is worth very little for men without saving faith, especially present-oriented men without faith in the future. Israel was about to become a nation of immigrants. The immigrant's future-oriented ideal of making a better life for his children and his grandchildren makes him a thrifty, hard-working, uncomplaining servant in society. Rarely do his grandchildren sustain either his eschatological vision or his savings rate. They assume that what they possess is normal and almost cost-free rather than the unique inheritance of two generations of thrift and hard work. They become historically forgetful. They become forgetful regarding the way to wealth: a high savings rate and service to the customer. Covenantal forgetfulness was the crucial economic threat to Israel, which was about to become a nation of newly arrived immigrants. Beware, Moses warned, that "thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:17).[2]

The older generation's weakness had been present-orientation: a refusal to be content with eschatological inheritance. As soon as Moses told them that they would not be allowed to conquer Canaan, they rushed into a forbidden war with Amalek (Num. 14:44–45). They immediately became overconfident when they should have been humble before pagan covenant-breakers for a generation. Previously, they had lacked confidence when they should have been humble before God and therefore confident regarding their imminent victory over covenant-breakers. In both cases, they did not have confidence in the predictability of God's historical sanctions: (1) negative corporate sanctions on Canaanites through Israel inside the land; (2) negative corporate sanctions on Israel through Amalekites outside the land.

These decisive events had been uniquely covenantal. First, the Israelites had not believed in the historical relevance of point one of the biblical covenant model: (1) the sovereignty of God over the events of history; (2) His unique judicial presence with them as a nation. Second, they had not accepted their national office as God's representative agent in bringing negative corporate sanctions against Canaan. Third, they had not believed God's revelation to them: imminent vic-

2. Chapter 21.

tory over Canaan, said Joshua and Caleb; imminent defeat by Amalek, said Moses. Fourth, they had initially sought to avoid imposing God's sanctions and then had sought to impose sanctions on their own. Fifth, they had no patience with the doctrine of eschatological inheritance. They were present-oriented.

C. Promise and Continuity

Moses pointed to the growth of Israel's population. They had arrived in Egypt as a handful; now they were a multitude. He cited the words of God to Abram: the stars of heaven. God's promise to childless Abram had been fulfilled. The change in name to Abraham—father of nations or multitudes—had been fulfilled.

God's revelation to Abram 470 years earlier had been reliable. The Israelites could see with their own eyes that God's promise had been fulfilled. But this had been equally true of the preceding generation. They had not believed their own eyes. They had not acknowledged that they were living proof of the reliability of the covenantal promise to Abram.[3] They had not understood that God's oath in history had come true in history. They had not looked to their own history, including their immediate history, with the eyes of faith. The fulfillment of God's oath to Abram had been ignored by the exodus generation. It had made no impact on their thinking, their words, or their actions.

The Israelites of the exodus generation did not acknowledge the importance of continuity in history. *The judicial basis of Israel's continuity was God's oath to Abram*. That which followed this oath had confirmed the terms of the oath. The oath had not been mere words; it had been a prophecy. This prophecy had come true in their generation. But the fathers of the conquest generation had refused to acknowledge that the fulfillment of God's oath in history had transferred to them a heavy degree of responsibility. They no doubt understood that this was the case, but they refused to acknowledge it. They were determined not to enter the Promised Land. They had no desire to transfer leadership to their sons under Joshua, even though Joshua's generation had been identified prophetically by God as the inheriting generation (Gen. 15:16).[4] They preferred not to inherit. They clung to their authority in the wilderness rather than transfer it to their sons and march into Canaan. They preferred to allow death to

3. He had not yet been re-named in Genesis 15.

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 23.

transfer this authority four decades later. They preferred wandering in the wilderness to seeing the fulfillment of God's covenant oath to Abram in their lifetimes.

God's oath to Abram was the basis of their covenantal inheritance as sons of Abraham. Their very self-definition was tied to God's oath. This meant that it was tied to everything that had happened since then, for the events since the days of Abraham had confirmed the oath. It was a true oath because it had been fulfilled as promised. Moses reminded the conquest generation: the handful had become a multitude, as promised. The God of Israel could foresee the future because He decreed the future. The decree of God is sovereign over history. Faith in this principle would enable the conquest generation to fulfill the promise regarding the fourth generation. The inheritance was assured, Moses told them.

Why was he so sure? Because he understood the history of Israel from the days of Abram. He understood that *continuity in history is covenantal*. The continuity of history rests on God's covenant oath and His sanctions in history. These historical sanctions confirm the original oath and bring it to pass in history. This means that *inheritance in history is covenantal*. It rests on God's oath. But God's oath is tied to God's law. This is why men are required to obey God. The fear of God produces obedience to God's law. Obedience brings God's positive sanctions. Positive sanctions bring the inheritance.

D. Continuity and Conquest

Point five of the biblical covenant model is continuity. But this implies succession in history. The Book of Deuteronomy makes it plain that *covenantal continuity involves inheritance*. It is not merely that Israel persevered as a nation. Israel inherited the Promised Land. Israel's perseverance was not supposed to be merely biological; it was to be cultural and economic. Israel was to take possession of wells that others had dug and vineyards that others had planted. Israel was not to wander in circles in the wilderness. God's promise to Abram had been more than mere national survival; it had involved the promise of inheritance.

The promise had been numerical: from no sons at all to sons like the stars of heaven. That is, the fulfillment of the promise could be visibly measured in history. Obviously, that promise had been figurative. Moses knew from the numbering exactly how many people constituted Israel. The symbolic language of the measureless stars of

heaven had pointed to a future census. The language of immeasurability had pointed to measurability, i.e., confirmation. The impossible would come true. Abraham's new name would in fact be confirmed in history. He was not merely to be the father of a handful; he was to become the father of nations. God asked him to believe this, which he did. Then it came true.

Covenantal continuity is the continuity of growth. It is not the continuity of mere survival; it is the continuity of *conquest*. It is not the continuity of life in the historical shadows; it is the continuity of *dominion*. It is not the continuity of mere confession; it is the continuity of *kingdom extension*. Whenever God's people refuse to acknowledge that the continuity promised to God's people in history is a continuity of conquest, dominion, and kingdom extension, they begin to act like the exodus generation. Their lack of faith produces timidity. Timidity produces half-hearted measures. The lack of success of half-hearted measures reinforces their lack of faith. They dwell in the wilderness and call it the Promised Land in history. They spiritualize the language of victory. They call a stalemate in the wilderness a triumph of the kingdom.

Moses was preparing them for conquest. He did this by telling them again and again to fear God. Why should they? Because God is the God of the oath. He is the God of oath-bound sanctions in history. *These historical sanctions confirm His oath by bringing expansion and victory to His people*. Moses was rallying the troops of the fourth generation by calling to their attention the history of God's dealings with earlier generations. He was calling them to military conquest in history; so, he reminded them of their demographic expansion in the past.

Moses told them to swear by God's name. This was a call to covenant renewal. They were to swear their oath to the God who had sworn an oath to Abram. The promises attached to that oath had been fulfilled. This oath-bound God "hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen." What they had seen was preliminary to what they would soon see: the defeat of Canaan. The defeat of Canaan had been part of the original oath (Gen. 15:16). There was no legitimate reason to hold back any longer. The inheritance was at hand.

Conclusion

Moses told them to fear God and swear allegiance to Him. He offered as evidence the fulfillment of the seemingly impossible promise to Abraham: the multiplication of his heirs. Israel had grown from seventy people to a multitude. Moses appealed to a positive corporate sanction—multiplication—as a justification of the requirement to fear God and swear allegiance to Him. Moses could also have mentioned the prophesied capitalization of Israel through the disinheritance of Egypt's firstborn, which was God's second promise to Abraham.

The third promise to Abraham, as yet unfulfilled, was Israel's inheritance of the land. This had been an eschatological inheritance for the exodus generation, just as Abraham's inheritance had been eschatological: multiplication of his heirs, their spoiling of the Egyptians, and the conquest of Canaan. The fulfillment of this third aspect of the inheritance was as sure as the first two had been. What had seemed impossible to Abram had already come true. Now the third stage of the inheritance was about to come true. Moses was arguing from the oath-bound covenant to the inheritance by way of historically fulfilled prophecy. The Abrahamic covenant's oath had invoked positive sanctions in history. These were sanctions of inheritance: heirs, capital, and land. Although Moses here mentioned only the multiplication of Abraham's seed, the other two sanctions were part of the original promise. The Israelites were therefore required to obey God's law (Deut. 11:1). Moses made it clear that all three aspects of the covenant are linked judicially: obedience to God's law, predictable oath-bound corporate sanctions in history, and corporate inheritance in history.

28

RAIN AND INHERITANCE

For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the LORD *thy God careth for: the eyes of the* LORD *thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the* LORD *your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.*

DEUTERONOMY 11:10–14

The theocentric focus of this prophecy is God as the Caretaker of the land who is sovereign over the weather. The prophecy's goal was to encourage obedience: "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day. . . ."

A. Egypt vs. Canaan

While God's general administration over the earth is still a feature of His sovereignty, this prophecy was specific: specific boundaries, specific topography, and specific weather. This prophecy was not universal. It was tied to the land of Canaan. As we shall see, the New Covenant established a different principle for weather. It is no longer predictable in terms of national ethics.

The fulfillment of this prophecy would take place within the boundaries of the Promised Land: "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart

be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you" (Deut. 11:16–17).

1. Rain vs. Nile

Canaan, Moses promised, would be very different from Egypt. One visible difference would be the source of water. The comparison was between watering with one's foot and watering from on high. What did it mean, "waterest with thy foot"? This probably referred to Egyptian irrigation. The Nile was the only source of water in Egypt. A series of man-made canals directed the water to various regions. Farmers tapped into the water supplied by these canals. A farm's irrigation system may have employed a series of small, foot-activated water wheels to direct the flow. This was W. M. Thompson's suggestion in 1880. He had seen nineteenth-century Egyptian peasants use such devices. Or the verse may have referred to the farmer's moving of dirt with his foot to plug one furrow in order to direct the water into another furrow.[1] In either case, irrigating by foot was a time-consuming, labor-intensive process. Much of the farmer's labor would have been devoted to directing the precious water into the seeded soil.

This would not be a farmer's main burden in the Promised Land. In Canaan, God would bring water from the sky. From the beginning of the year to the end, God's eyes would be upon this land (v. 12). This was a clear benefit compared with Egypt, where the survival of the nation depended on the brief period each year in which the Nile flooded. This was the only source of Egypt's water and therefore its prosperity. Not so in Canaan. Under God's direct authority, the rain and the sun would nourish the land to enable it to produce its wealth.

There was another important aspect of this blessing: the reduction of administrative bureaucracy. We know that whenever ancient societies depended heavily on national irrigation systems and sophisticated technologies of flood control, they became centralized bureaucracies that were controlled by those with the astronomical and technical information necessary to plan agriculture.[2] Wittfogel calls these cen-

1. W. M. Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1880), I, p. 22.

2. Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957).

tralized civilizations *hydraulic economies*. "Time keeping and calendar making are essential for the success of all hydraulic economies. . . ."[3] He classified Egypt as a hydraulic economy.

2. Calendars and Control

We know that ancient Egypt possessed a sophisticated astronomical calendar that charted the stars.[4] One specialist in the ancient world's systems of measurement has reported that the Egyptians as early as the first dynasty had measured the geography of the Nile down to minutes of both longitude and latitude, from the equator to the Mediterranean Sea. This could not have been done, he argues, without highly advanced astronomical knowledge.[5] Egypt was the classic model of an imperial bureaucracy.[6] It is not far-fetched to connect Egypt's bureaucracy to Egypt's dependence on a single source of water.

The land of Canaan was a very different environment from Egypt. Its source of water was the heavens. There could be no centralized control of the water supply. There was no way to gain a special advantage through knowledge of the calendar combined with knowledge of the rise and fall of a single river. The knowledge of the seasons was available to any observant farmer. Knowledge of the timing of the rain would not become the monopoly of any priestly caste. This necessarily decentralized power in Israel.

As for the calendar, the priests had to share this knowledge with the people. The three annual journeys to Jerusalem had to be timed perfectly (Ex. 23:14–17). So did the day of atonement (Lev. 16:29–30). The nation had to be told in advance when these times were so that people could plan their journeys. *The times of the year were to remain common knowledge in Israel*. The firstfruits offering had to be made at Pentecost, 50 days after Passover (Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:15–17). The feast of Booths or Tabernacles was linked to the harvest (Lev. 23:39–43). The Israelites understood the agricultural calendar.

The specialized knowledge of the calendar was also a major fac-

3. *Ibid*., p. 29.

4. Henri Frankfort, *et al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1946] 1977), p. 81.

5. Livio C. Stecchini, "Astronomical Theory and Historical Data," in *The Velikovsky Affair: The Warfare of Science and Scientism*, ed. Alfred de Grazia (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1966), p. 167.

6. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985), ch. 2.

tor in priestly control over the ancient classical world.[7] Each city had a different calendar because it had different gods and different festivals.[8] In Greece, the Olympic games were a common festival, but different cities had different calendars.[9] Not so in Israel. The festivals were not tribal. They were confined to one location, which later became Jerusalem. The tribes journeyed to that city. There was one God, one calendar, one series of national festivals.[10]

The sabbatical year of release (Deut. 15),[11] in which the reading of the law to the assembled nation would occur (Deut. 31:10–13),[12] had to be known to all men in Israel, including strangers. This would in turn provide knowledge of the timing of the jubilee year (Lev. 25). None of this was secret information. Knowledge of God's law and knowledge of the calendar were linked.

The tribes had possession of information regarding their boundaries. This decentralized another form of knowledge in Israel: geography. The four types of specialized knowledge by which Egyptian bureaucrats controlled the nation—astronomy, the calendar, flood cycles, and geography—were either possessed by all Israelites or were irrelevant to agriculture in Israel.

God controlled the water supply, Moses said. For as long as Israelites believed this, the priesthood could not plausibly assert power over the affairs of the nation based on their special meteorological knowledge. In fact, the opposite was true: the false religion of the priests of Ahab's reign was the cause of God's withholding of rain (I Kings 17:1). A prophet who opposed the official priesthood to the point of commanding their collective execution (I Kings 18:40) was the mediatorial source of water in Israel: an anti-bureaucratic figure if there ever was one.

B. Linear Time, Eschatological Time

Time for Israel was not cyclical; it was linear. It was linear because it was eschatological. Dozens of prophecies were tied to Israel's future. Jacob-Israel's prophecy regarding the coming of Shiloh was the main

7. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955), III:VII:2, pp. 158–60.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
9. *Idem.*
10. Chapter 31.
11. Chapter 36.
12. Chapter 75.

one: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10).

Astronomy in the ancient world produced a cyclical worldview. The priests' knowledge of the specific positioning of the heavens throughout the year was extremely sophisticated—far beyond that possessed by most educated people in modern times. The ancients knew about the wobbling of the earth's axis, although they explained this in terms of the wobbling of the heavens.[13] They knew about the 26,000-year cycle of the pole stars. This "great year" led to a cyclical view of history.[14]

They did not know about the hydrologic cycle: bodies of water- evaporation-condensation-rain. They had a more direct view of rainfall: the intervention of some deity. Moses called it "the rain of heaven." God views the land from heaven. He cares for the land. He sends the rain. The absence of rain should be seen as a covenantal curse: "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you" (Deut. 11:16–17). This warning was fulfilled under Ahab (I Kings 17).

Thus, the cycle of rain was not to be understood as a cycle in the sense of providing a model for time. Israel's agricultural cycle would be cyclical: rain, sun, harvest, and planting, but always within the framework of the three annual feasts and festivals. *These festivals were eschatological, always looking ahead toward the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom*. The rain cycle was therefore covenantal. It would be governed by the nation's obedience or disobedience to God's law.

Here was a crucial distinction between Israel and all other ancient nations: *nature was not seen as normative*. Its processes were seen as dependent on the nation's covenantal faithfulness. The operations of nature in Israel were different from its operations outside the borders of the land. The Mosaic Covenant's land laws and seed laws were unique to Israel, for they were tied to the messianic prophecies, especially the prophecy regarding Shiloh.[15] Inside Israel's borders, nature

13. Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill: An essay on myth and the future of time* (Boston: Godine, [1969] 1977).

14. Chapter 21:E

15. North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 32.

was an aspect of the special grace of the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 11:13–15). Outside these borders, the common grace of the Adamic covenant applied: "...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45b).[16]

Jacob had gone down into Egypt because the common curse of nature had impoverished him. God's special grace had been shown to Egypt through Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Egypt had grain for sale during the famine; Palestine did not. God did not spare Egypt from nature's curse by interfering with nature's processes. He spared Egypt by a special revelation in advance. God had a plan for the sons of Jacob. This plan was larger than the plans of the decision- makers. As Joseph said to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

Egypt's salvation in a time of famine had been based on the Pharaoh's power to tax one-fifth of the crops of Egypt (Gen. 41:34). He had the power to place Joseph in charge of the entire operation: "And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:43). This power was derived from two sources: Egypt's faith in the Pharaoh as a god and the priesthood's knowledge of the cycles of the Nile. Joseph exempted the priesthood from his famine-driven purchase of the land of Egypt in the name of Pharaoh (Gen. 47:22). This indicates that the priests had been the allies of Pharaoh in maintaining Pharaoh's power over the nation. The Mosaic law prohibited the exercise of such power by any king in Israel (Deut. 17:16–17).[17] Israel's covenant-governed hydrologic cycle reinforced this prohibition.

C. The Biblical Doctrine of Economic Growth

Because the Mosaic Covenant was eschatological, Israelites could legitimately expect long-term per capita economic growth in response to their faithfulness. The cyclical pattern of rain-sun-harvest would not become a restriction on Israel's development. On the contrary, the covenantal basis of this cycle guaranteed compound growth in response to national covenantal faithfulness. The agricultural cycle

16. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 10.

17. Chapter 41.

was not dominant inside Israel's borders; covenant law, its sanctions, and linear time were.

The Mosaic Covenant's positive sanction of growth—population and productivity—meant that the Israelites were not prisoners of nature. Nature is subordinate to God, and God ruled Israel by a covenant. *The Israelites could gain control over nature through national obedience*. In Egypt, the priests and perhaps other initiated specialists controlled the output of agriculture through their guild's knowledge of the calendar and the Nile's flood pattern. Salvation was by knowledge and power, not national obedience. In Israel, none of this was the case. The wealth of national Israel would be the product of ethics: the special grace of the Mosaic Covenant. Its positive economic sanctions were population growth and increased wealth per capita. The biblical model for economic growth was based on the existence of visible economic blessings as the means of covenantal confirmation. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18).[18]

A cyclical worldview denies the long-run possibility of such positive economic sanctions. So does the modern world's zero economic growth model.[19] The ancients believed that a cycle of growth would always be undermined by a cycle of decay. The cosmic age of gold was followed by ages of debased metals.[20] This pattern of decay was dominant in the thinking of cyclical cosmologists. The great year would repeat its cycle, and social cycles must reflect this cosmic cycle.[21]

Moses denied the existence of any cosmic cycle when he told the people that rain would come in terms of the covenant. *The Mosaic Covenant was eschatological*. Its sanctions had to be interpreted in terms of linear eschatology, not the great year. There would be only one Messiah, not an endless series of them.

The Bible's primary theme is this: *the transition from wrath to grace*. There would not be another Adam to repeat the transgression of the first Adam. On the contrary, the Messiah would be a superior Adam, a second Adam whose fulfillment of the terms of the covenant would forever replace the Adamic covenant and its tests and sanctions. The

18. Chapter 21.

19. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion,* Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), ch. 55. The economist most closely associated with this worldview is E. J. Mishan.

20. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 105–200.

21. Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959).

New Heavens and the New Earth would replace the present cosmic order. Yet there must be eschatological continuity between history's New Heavens and the New Earth and eternity's.

> For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed (Isa. 65:17–20).[22]

This prophesied era cannot refer to eternity, for sinners will still be dwelling among the righteous. Death will still be present among the saints, which is not a feature of the redeemed and resurrected world of eternity. So, the prophesied millennial blessing of extended life expectancy is historical. No verse in Scripture more clearly refutes the amillennial system of interpretation.[23] This is why the amillennialist theologian Archibald Hughes, in his book, *A New Heaven and New Earth* (1958),[24] refuses comment on this passage. He writes as though this passage did not exist, despite the fact that his book invokes its language. He commented exclusively on the New Testament's passages where this phrase occurs. He knew exactly what he was doing. He refused to discuss the historical aspects of kingdom inheritance in a book devoted to the eternal inheritance. This is the heart of amillennialism: it asserts a radical discontinuity between New Covenant history and eternity.[25]

The Mosaic Covenant's optimistic eschatological worldview made possible the hope of sustained positive sanctions: *a permanent inheritance*. The Bible affirms that this covenantal inheritance cannot be

22. Gary North, *Restoration and Dominion: An Economic Commentaty on the Prophets* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 15.

23. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), pp. 98–106, 213–14. That this passage represents a crucial exegetical problem to amillennialism is recognized by David J. Engelsma, theologian of the Dutch-American Protestant Reformed Church. Engelsma, *Christ's Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of Reformed Amillennialism* (Redlands, California: Reformed Witness, chaps. 15–17. He is responding to my challenge in *Millennialism and Social Theory*. On Engelsma's eschatology, see Appendix I, Section C:1.

24. Archibald Hughes, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: An Introductory Study of the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Eternal Inheritance* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1958).

25. North, *Millennialism and Social Theory*, p. 123.

dispersed or destroyed in eternity. It will begin to manifest itself in history. Over and over, the Old Testament affirms this fact:

> His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (Ps. 25:13).
>
> For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9).
>
> But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Ps. 37:11).

This inheritance is the kingdom of God. It is a kingdom visibly manifested by its dominion in history. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar:

> Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34–35).
>
> And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure (Dan. 2:44–45).

Sustained economic growth is not only possible; it is normative. It remains an ethical obligation for every covenant-keeping society. This economic implication of the eschatology of the Mosaic Covenant was not annulled by the New Covenant. The fact that Shiloh came to fulfill the terms of the Mosaic Covenant did not annul its eschatology. On the contrary, Jesus Christ announced that His definitive fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant in history must be progressively implemented in history by His followers (Matt. 28:18–20).[26] We call this the Great Commission. *Commission* is the correct word: this world-transforming task has been commissioned to us, and we are paid a very high commission: 90%. God contents Himself with a mere 10%: the tithe.[27] As any salesman will tell you, a 90% commission structure is a very great commission.

26. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 48.
27. Gary North, *The Covenantal Tithe* (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2011).

Conclusion

Moses told the Israelites that their inheritance in the Promised Land would be something unique: an agricultural cycle marked by covenantal sanctions, positive and negative. Their covenantal faithfulness would determine which category of sanctions they would experience. The covenant, not miracles, would soon become normative inside Israel's national boundaries.

The Mosaic Covenant's eschatological foundation would therefore govern the Mosaic economy in the broadest sense, Moses told them. Negative corporate sanctions would not become permanent; positive corporate sanctions could become permanent. Paganism's cyclical pessimism has no covenantal foundation, Moses implicitly was telling them. Covenant-keepers will inevitably inherit the earth in history. The kingdom of God is the universal kingdom in history because it is the universal kingdom in eternity. While the Old Covenant did not speak about eternity, it spoke very clearly about history. It taught that history is covenantal, not cyclical. Moses said that this fact would be seen by all Israel in the rain of heaven.

29

LAW, SANCTIONS, AND INHERITANCE

> *Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the* Lord *sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 11:18–21

The theocentric focus of this law is the authority of the specially revealed law of God. The words are the law. This usage conforms to the use of the Hebrew word *dabar* ("word") as "commandment" in Exodus 34:28: "And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." The association of the number "ten" with "commandments" occurs only with the word *dabar*.[1]

A. Mastery of the Law

The laying up of God's words in one's heart and soul is described here as if the words were to be written on one's hand or written down on pieces of paper and pasted to one's forehead. The language here is allegorical. God's words are not literally stored up in the blood-pumping organ we call the heart. They are, however, stored away in the obedient covenant-keeper's soul. They are to guide his actions. These

1. See also Deuteronomy 4:13, 10:4.

words must be reinforced throughout the day by personal obedience and by teaching the next generation by word and deed.

The context of this passage is God's law (v. 20). Obeying the laws of God is to become a way of life for all men. The covenant-keeper is supposed to talk about the law from morning to night as he works beside his children. The law governs every aspect of our lives, and so we are to talk about it throughout the day. Our very conversations are to remind us of the comprehensive nature of God's law. Because God's law is comprehensive, our discussion of the law is to be comprehensive. *Every covenant-keeper is to become an expert in the law of God*. He is to think about it, discuss it, and explore its implications every day. Men are to discuss God's law daily because they are to honor it daily through obedience. Men are to use their own words to build ethical hedges around their lives. Their own words should serve as constant ethical reminders: guideposts. To argue that this law was exclusively a land law is to deny the previous sentences in this paragraph.

Yet there was a sense in which this command was a land law. The Ten Commandments were to be written down on the doorposts of every home. This was a literal requirement under the Mosaic economy. In the United States in the 1950s, families often placed a rubber doormat in front of the door that said, "welcome." Those who came in were first supposed to wipe off the dirt from the soles of their shoes by standing on the doormat and rubbing their shoes on it. Symbolically, the Israelites were to wipe off their evil behavior from their souls when they entered a home.

In modern times, Orthodox Jews seek to obey this law in a literal fashion. They place a tiny scroll of the Ten Commandments inside a small storage device called a mezuza, which is then affixed to the front door of the home or business. The problem with their interpretation of this law is that the scroll inside a mezuza can't be seen. The device can easily become a kind of talisman. I have seen a Jew kiss his fingers and then touch the mezuza on leaving his business. This is thought to be a way to show respect, but the problem is that the stipulations of the law itself are not visible. This makes the mezuza analogous to the Ark of the Covenant, where the tables of the law were stored. The idea of having the Decalogue written on the doorposts was that it could be read by all literate people who passed through the door. The same was true of all gateways. This included the gates of the city, where the judges met to decide cases. This law required that the Ten Commandments be written on the equivalent of the wall of a civil court.

Is this law still in force? The New Covenant indicates that there has been a definitive shift from external writing to internal writing. The Epistle to the Hebrews twice asserts that the New Covenant has fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah 33:31–33: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10). "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10:16). I regard this as analogous to the circumcision of the heart, which is the fulfillment of the requirement of the circumcision of the flesh. "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:29). The circumcision of the heart annulled the Old Covenant's requirement of the circumcision of the flesh. Similarly, embedding the law of God into the heart in the New Covenant annulled the law requiring the Israelites to write the Ten Commandments on their doorposts and gates. It is not that the Israelites were not also required to place the law in their hearts. They were, as this Deuteronomic passage indicates. But this external requirement is no longer judicially binding on covenant-keepers under the New Covenant. The replacement of circumcision with baptism is the reason. *Covenantal circumcision is now exclusively inward and judicial*. So is the requirement of covenantal law-posting.

B. Enjoying the Inheritance

There is a positive sanction attached to the law governing judicial instruction: "That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut. 11:21). Long life in the land is a universally desirable gift from God. Nobody appeared a second time before any king in the ancient world with the greeting: "O, King, live briefly." He said, "O, King, live forever."[2]

The promise of long life connects law and sanctions judicially. In this case, the connection is stated positively: teach your children God's law, and both you and they will enjoy long life. This is an extension of the fifth commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that

2. I Kings 1:31; Nehemiah 2:3; Daniel 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:6, 21.

thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12).[3] Paul wrote: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1–3). There should be no question that Paul regarded the judicial link between obedience to parents and long life on earth as a New Covenant phenomenon. This means that the fifth commandment was not a land law whose visible corporate sanction was tied exclusively to the Mosaic economy in Israel. The positive sanction of long life for obedience to parents has not been annulled by the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. This implies that the positive sanction of long life for teaching one's children about God's law has also not been annulled. What has been annulled is the circumscribed geographical focus of the public reign of the original laws: the land of Israel. Covenant-keepers are no longer promised that they will live long in the land of Israel in peace and prosperity, handing down the inheritance. Paul made it clear: the promise now applies to the whole earth. The New Covenant rests on the Great Commission. The predictable sanctions of God's law now apply everywhere that the gospel is preached and the covenant is affirmed corporately. *This is what it means to disciple the nations*. They are brought under the discipline—the sanctions—of God's covenant.

This is extremely significant for the development of Christian social theory. *The covenantal link between God's Bible-revealed law and His predictable corporate sanctions in history has not been broken by the advent of the New Covenant*. In the case of Deuteronomy 11:21, the connection was rigorously covenantal: (1) God has given His people the land (transcendence); (2) parents teach children (hierarchy); (3) God's law is put into the heart (ethics); (4) Israelites can live long in the land sworn by God to the fathers (oath); (5) their children can also live long in the land (succession).

C. Inheritance and Disinheritance

The land would be someone's inheritance, either Israel's or the Canaanites'. The alternative was for the land to return to the beasts, which God would not allow (Ex. 23:29). Mankind, not the beasts,

3. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 25.

is to exercise dominion over nature (Gen. 1:26;[4] 9:1–3[5]). The conservationist rhetoric about the sacred wilderness rests on bad theology. For Israel to inherit, the Canaanites would have to be disinherited. This is the model for eschatology: *the expansion of God's kingdom in history must come at the expense of Satan's kingdom*. To argue otherwise is to argue that Satan's visible kingdom must expand at the expense of God's, which is exactly what amillennialists argue, and dispensational premillennialists also argue regarding the "Church Age."

1. Confidence and Fear

At the final judgment, Satan and his covenantal subordinates will be totally disinherited (Rev. 20:10). Covenant-keepers will then openly inherit the whole earth, and both it and they will be relieved of the burden of sin and its curses (Rev. 21).[6] The conquest of Canaan was a type of the final judgment. What would be the basis of Israel's inheritance? Judicially, it would be obedience: the covenantally representative obedience of the coming Messiah (Isa. 53). But obedience was not the whole story; it never is. Sanctions are attached to God's law. The sanctions in this case would be confidence (positive) and fear (negative).

> For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you (Deut. 11:22–25).

The Israelites were supposed to have confidence in God as totally sovereign over history. Next, they were supposed to trust Moses' words as representing God. Third, they were supposed to trust God's law. Fourth, they were supposed to trust God's prophecy of the fear

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 3.

5. *Ibid.*, ch. 18.

6. This final conquest over sin is denied by the heretical position known by its defenders as "full preterism." This is the preterism presented in the obscure nineteenth-century book, *The Parousia*, by J. Stuart Russell. For my critique of Russell, see Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012). Appendix.

which He would place in the hearts of the Canaanites. Obedience to God's law was the key. Their obedience would prove their faith in God and Moses' words in God's name. If they obeyed God's law, they would inevitably inherit the Promised Land.

2. Ethics

The crucial theological point here is that *inheritance is fundamentally ethical*. Obedience to God's law is the inescapable component of inheritance. Faith in God is important, but faith without works is dead faith (James 2:17–20). It does not count. It is analogous to someone who believes that the stock market will rise, but who then refuses to invest his money in terms of what he believes. He refuses to "put his money where his mouth is." He does not participate in the rise. His accurate forecast haunts him after it turns out to be true. This, too, is a model for eschatology. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19–21).[7] The person who views the inheritance as ultimately eschatological must see to it that he structures his life in terms of the covenantal stipulations governing this inheritance. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26).[8]

The Israelites would not be allowed to claim this victory without risk, nor would they possesses it overnight. "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land" (Ex. 23:29–30). (There is nothing sacred about wilderness areas. They are merely as-yet undomesticated regions, like the garden of Eden prior to Adam.) The promise to Abraham regarding the fourth generation's inheritance of the land was God's *definitive* eschatological announcement regarding the conquest (Gen. 15:16).[9] The military conquest of Canaan would be the *progressive* fulfillment of this prophecy. The eventual displacement of the Canaanites would be

7. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 13.

8. *Ibid*., ch. 35.

9. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 23.

the *final* aspect of this prophecy. To achieve this, the Israelites had to trust God's promises.

3. Eschatology

This is the model for biblical eschatology. The inheritance of the earth in history by God's covenant people is *definitive*, for Jesus Christ is the only lawful heir. Jesus has transferred this inheritance to His church (Matt. 28:18).[10] This was the fulfillment of what He had told the Jews: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The process of inheritance in history is *ethical*: ever-increasing obedience to God's law, which is followed by ever-increasing positive economic sanctions that confirm the covenant. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18).[11] Covenant-keepers are required to *redeem* the world for God, i.e., buy it back. They are not to use military conquest or force; that was a one-time event for Israel. They must buy it back by preaching the gospel, obeying God's law, and faithfully employing the wealth that God pours down on them because of their obedience. Covenant-keepers will inherit the earth *progressively* through their obedience to God's law, their confidence in the transforming power of the gospel, their ability to meet customer demand efficiently, their biological multiplication, their tithing to the church, and their charitable service. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).[12]

If there were no predictable corporate sanctions attached to God's Bible-revealed law, we could have no legitimate confidence in the future success of the kingdom of God in history. Our eschatological hopes would be exclusively post-mortem. But the Bible teaches that whatever takes place on earth is a down payment—an earnest—for what will take place beyond the final judgment. History points to eternity; earth points to heaven. Jesus warned Nicodemus: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12). At the final judgment, cov-

10. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

11. Chapter 21.

12. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke,* 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 38.

enant-keepers will inherit the earth; covenant-breakers will be completely disinherited (Matt. 25:31–46). But final judgment is preceded by progressive judgment in history. *What takes place in history mirrors the final inheritance and disinheritance, so as to provide a covenantal warning in history*. There must be sufficient continuity between history and eternity to provide covenant-keepers with legitimate confidence and to provide covenant-breakers with legitimate fear. The mandated conquest of Canaan is the model for history, which in turn is the model for eternity. The failure of the Israelites to complete the conquest is not the model, for Christ's resurrection and ascension have taken place in history: the empowerment of His people.

D. Teaching One's Children

The proper method of writing the law on the heart is by instruction. Parents are to instruct their children in the details of God's Bible-revealed law throughout the day. This is good for the children and better for the parent. The parent cannot in good faith utter that famous disclaimer, "Do as I say, not as I do."[13] The law of God requires obedience. There is no legitimate escape from the stipulations of biblical law. We are to keep the whole of biblical law in our mandated quest for perfection.[14] The child should be able to see consistency between what the parent says and does.

The children are to internalize biblical law—write it in their hearts—through hearing it and seeing their parents applying it daily by obeying it. They are to mimic their parents, and in doing so, they reinforce the law of God, which is already written on their hearts through the grace of conversion. *They are to achieve progressively what regeneration has already done for them definitively*. The progressive transition from wrath to grace involves God's preparation of the heart for the law. At the time of redemption, God creates a special place in a covenant-keeping man's conscience that is designed to house God's law. Then the covenant-keeper is supposed to work all of his life to fill

13. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

14. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). "Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God" (Deut. 18:13). "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4). "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day (I Kings 8:61). "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

up this designated area of his conscience with practical knowledge of the law. As he increases his understanding of how the laws are to be applied in specific cases, he becomes a mature Christian.

Successful teachers tell us that the very process of teaching increases the teacher's understanding of the material taught. The process reinforces what the teacher knows, imbedding it in his mind. If he does not teach it, the material fades from his thinking. Like notes taken in college and never reviewed or taught, yet never thrown away, the note-taker's memory of them fades. James wrote: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22–25). Moses warned Israel not to permit the forgetfulness born of inaction. The mental notes taken in childhood must be reviewed and renewed throughout life. The very act of imparting this knowledge to children throughout the normal events of the day is a means of retaining the law and writing it in one's heart.

The Calvinist philosopher Cornelius Van Til described his early years growing up on a Dutch farm in the late nineteenth century:

> Ours was not in any sense a pietistic family. There were not any great emotional outbursts on any occasion that I recall. There was much ado about making hay in the summer and about caring for the cows and sheep in the winter, but round about it all there was a deep conditioning atmosphere. Though there were no tropical showers of revivals, the relative humidity was always very high. At every meal the whole family was present. There was a closing as well as an opening prayer, and a chapter of the Bible was read each time. The Bible was read through from Genesis to Revelation. At breakfast or at dinner, as the case might be, we would hear of the New Testament, or of 'the children of Gad after their families, of Zephon and Haggi and Shuni and Ozni, of Eri and Areli.' I do not claim that I always fully understood the meaning of it all. Yet of the total effect there can be no doubt. The Bible became for me, in all its parts, in every syllable, the very Word of God. I learned that I must believe the Scripture story, and that 'faith' was a gift of God. What had happened in the past, and particularly what had happened in the past in Palestine, was of the greatest moment to me.[15]

15. Cornelius Van Til, *Why I Believe in God* (Philadelphia: Committee on Christian Education, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, n.d.), pp. 5–6.

His parents understood the need of presenting the Bible to their children day by day. The children learned that the Bible was very important to their parents. It therefore became important for the children. Years later, Van Til would tell his students at Westminster Seminary that his father used to teach him and his brother as the three of them worked in the fields on their hands and knees. His brother's son Henry later followed in his uncle's footsteps to become a professor and author.[16] Henry's son also became a professor and an author.[17] This inheritance began in the fields, with a father teaching his sons the Bible and the catechism. The father was planting more than physical seeds as they worked.

E. The Christian School

The day came when Van Til's parents sent him to a Christian school. He remembered his vaccination decades later. "I can still feel it."[18] The school was itself a form of vaccination: a vaccination against covenant-breaking. The school was an extension of his family. His parents had vowed at his baptism to instruct him in God's ways. "It was in pursuance of this vow that they sent me to a Christian grade school."[19] The school taught a curriculum from the point of view of his Dutch Calvinist parents. "In short, the whole wide world that gradually opened up for me through my schooling was regarded as operating in its every aspect under the direction of the all-powerful God whose child I was through Christ. I was to learn to think God's thoughts after him in every field of endeavor."[20]

Sending children to a Christian school was common to conservative Dutch households in his day, and remains so. The Christian school has kept the Dutch community together in the United States, and it has kept Dutch Calvinists together in the secular, covenant-breaking Netherlands. The Christian school provides specialized education that parents are not always capable of providing. The school is based on the biblical principle of the division of labor: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after

16. Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1959).

17. L. John Van Til, *Liberty of Conscience: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1972).

18. Van Til, *Why I Believe in God*, p. 6.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

20. *Idem.*

that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:27–28).[21]

The school provides specialized instruction. This instruction replaces the father's time in the fields or wherever he works. With the vast increase in the division of labor since the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century, a father is less and less able to pass his skills to his sons. He works away from home, and his skills rarely match his sons' abilities or interests. They learn their morality from him, but not their occupations.

In the eighteenth century and earlier, wealthy families hired tutors for their own children. The wealthy in England have for two centuries sent their sons to boarding schools in order to separate them from their families. This is also done by the wealthiest old families in the United States.[22] *Separating young sons from their families is a rite of passage into the elite of both societies*. This transfers influence to the elite prep schools and then a handful of elite universities. The less wealthy have had to settle for a classroom setting: more students per instructor and therefore a lower cost per family.

Education today is overwhelmingly formalized. From age five through graduate school (age 30?), the student is educated in the classroom. Formal education is tied to the printed word. Apprenticeship one-on-one with a master craftsman has been replaced by classroom bureaucracy and written examinations. People who are skilled at taking written examinations, but unskilled in making a living in a competitive market, teach children about how to make a living in a competitive market or, more likely, how to be successful in bureaucratic careers. The teachers in both systems reproduce themselves: craftsmen (few) or bureaucrats (many).

The modern state seeks to steal the legacy of the faithful: the hearts and minds of their children. The educational bureaucrats today have imposed a comprehensive system of *ideological kidnapping* on the voters. This is the inherent nature of all compulsory education, regulated education, and tax-funded education. Education is not neutral. The bureaucrats have built a gigantic system of humanist indoctrination with funds extracted from all local residents in the name of a hypothetical, religiously common-ground education. This justification has

21. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians* 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 15.

22. Nelson Aldrich, Jr., *Old Money: The Mythology of America's Upper Class* (New York: Knopf, 1988), pp. 144–58.

always been a covenant-breaking lie, from Unitarian Horace Mann's public schools in Massachusetts in the 1830s until today.[23] From the late nineteenth century until today, leading American educators have been forthright in their public pronouncements of their agenda. This agenda is deeply religious. John Dewey, the "father" of progressive education, dedicated humanist, and philosopher stated his position plainly: "Our schools, in bringing together those of different nationalities, languages, traditions, and creeds, in assimilating them together upon the basis of what is common and public in endeavor and achievement, are performing an infinitely significant religious work."[24] More than this: "In such a dim, blind, but effective way the American people is conscious that its schools serve best the cause of religion in serving the cause of social unification. . . ."[25]

Conclusion

Moses gave Israel a command and a promise: law and sanctions. He told them to mark their dwelling places by the law of God. He told them to teach their children the law. In doing this, they would hide the law in their hearts (Ps. 119:11). If they did this, Moses said, they would be visibly blessed with large families. They would enjoy "the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut. 11:21).

The covenantal link between obedience and visible sanctions was basic to this passage. The inheritance was defined in terms of heirs and their possession of land. Paul wrote that the same link still operates under the New Covenant (Eph. 6:1–3). There is no way covenantally to break the link uniting law-keeping, positive sanctions, and inheritance, any more than there is a way to break the link uniting law-breaking, disobedience, and disinheritance. These links make possible the development of biblical social theory. Being possible, the development of an explicitly biblical social theory is a covenantal mandate, part of the dominion covenant itself.

Because Christian theologians for nineteen centuries have ignored or even denied the existence of these judicial links in the New Cov-

23. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education: Studies in the History of the Philosophy of Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1963).

24. John Dewey, "Religion and Our Schools," *Hibbert Journal* (July 1908); reprinted in *Education Today*, edited by Joseph Ratner (New York: Putnam's, 1940), p. 80. This document is reprinted photographically in David Noebel, *et al., Clergy in the Classroom: The Religion of Secular Humanism* (Manitou Springs, Colorado: Summit Press, 1995), p. 19. Many other statements like Dewey's appear in this highly revealing book.

25. *Ibid*., pp. 80–81; in Noebel, *ibid*., pp. 19–20.

enant era, the church has not been able to develop an explicitly biblical social theory. The result is today's Babylonian captivity of the church. Like the Hebrews during the original Babylonian captivity, most Christians prefer ghetto life outside the Promised Land to the rigors of a life of rebuilding the nation's broken wall and the crumbling homes of their forefathers. Only a remnant has decided to return. This remnant has yet to build up the high walls of Jerusalem. Its members are laying the marker stones, however. This work is necessary before the serious work of reconstruction begins.

One of the reasons why the idea of the God-mandated task of Christian reconstruction suffered a three-century hiatus, from the late seventeenth century to the late twentieth century, was the almost universal hostility of the church to the suggestion that the Bible-revealed laws of God are part of an integrated system that is still binding on society. Christians generally give lip service to the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20), yet they ignore the Decalogue's unity with the case laws that followed (Ex. 21–23).[26] Few modern Christian scholars have understood that the case laws of Exodus were applications of the judicial principles set forth in the Decalogue. Rushdoony did, and his *Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973) marked the awakening from the slumber that had overtaken Christian moral theorists since 1673: the publication of Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*. The demise of Protestant casuistry by 1700 left Protestants without revelational guidelines for civic morality. The case-law specifics that illustrate the Ten Commandments faded from most Protestants' memories.

The rise of biblical higher criticism in mid-seventeenth England came as a response to the Puritans' affirmation of biblical law as a guide for society, including civil government. Critics of the authority of the Old Testament argued that the Old Testament is a literary work, not a valid source of universally binding judicial standards.[27] This intellectual development paralleled and encouraged the rise of the Enlightenment, which sought to sever both natural science and social theory from biblical judicial standards.

The attitude of the higher critics toward the Mosaic law had been in the church from the early centuries. In this sense, Anglo-American Puritanism represented a break with church history. The higher crit-

26. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990).

27. Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, [1980] 1984; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

ics provided a new justification for the long hostility of Christians toward the Mosaic law: the unreliability of the texts of the Old Testament rather than the annulment of the Mosaic law by the New Testament. This explanation was not welcomed by Anglo-American mainline churches until after 1874, when Old Testament higher criticism was imported from Germany and promoted by university scholars. Yet the critics' hostile attitude toward biblical law had prevailed in Anglo-American churches for almost two centuries by 1875. The Enlightenment's humanists had made common cause with the church's moral theologians in affirming natural law and natural reason as the sources of valid standards for science and social theory. This informal operational alliance still exists, despite the almost universal collapse of faith in natural law theory among humanists as a result of Darwinism's attack on any concept of permanently binding laws in a world of changing environments and evolving species.[28]

Critics of biblical law have recognized that biblical law is an integrated system. *First*, biblical law relies on the presupposition that God rules over the universe: theocracy ("God rules"). *Second*, there are parallel hierarchical systems of law-enforcement in church, state, and family. Christians generally accept the principle of theonomy with respect to churches and families, but they reject it with respect to civil government. This rejection has been basic to the humanist-pietist alliance, which is now breaking down because humanists are systematically using the state to encroach on the Christian family and the church in the name of common-ground principles of morality and law that have precedence over biblical family law and biblical church law. *Third*, biblical law is revelational, which implies that non-biblical law-orders are invalid in God's eyes. This challenges natural law theory and all forms of political pluralism. This is an affront to the Enlightenment, whose principles most Christians have adopted with respect to civil government. *Fourth*, biblical law and biblical sanctions are a unity. This means that there really is hell, which is the Enlightenment's most hated concept. The unbreakable unity of God's law and God's sanctions also implies that civil governments should impose the Bible's mandated civil sanctions. This suggestion is an affront to all humanists. Such a view of civil law points to the final judgment and therefore God's sovereignty over man: a down payment (earnest) in history of eternity. Biblical civil sanctions are therefore rejected by all humanists and most Christians, who have adopted Enlightenment so-

28. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, Appendix A.

cial and political theories in the name of a socially responsible Christianity. *Fifth*, God's sanctions in history produce predictable winners (covenant-keepers) and losers (covenant-breakers) in history. This in turn points to the triumph of Christendom in history. In short, such a system of sanctions-based social and cultural inheritance is inherently postmillennial. Eschatologically, this suggestion is unacceptable to pessimillennial Christians, whose name is legion.

The result is the Babylonian captivity of the church. Unlike the original Babylonian captivity, captives today rejoice in their chains. They call this system of officially neutral political pluralism *freedom*. They seem genuinely surprised when their humanistic captors continually shorten the chains and tighten the bands.